California's Computer Magazine

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MARCH 1985 FREE

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BBS-Land:
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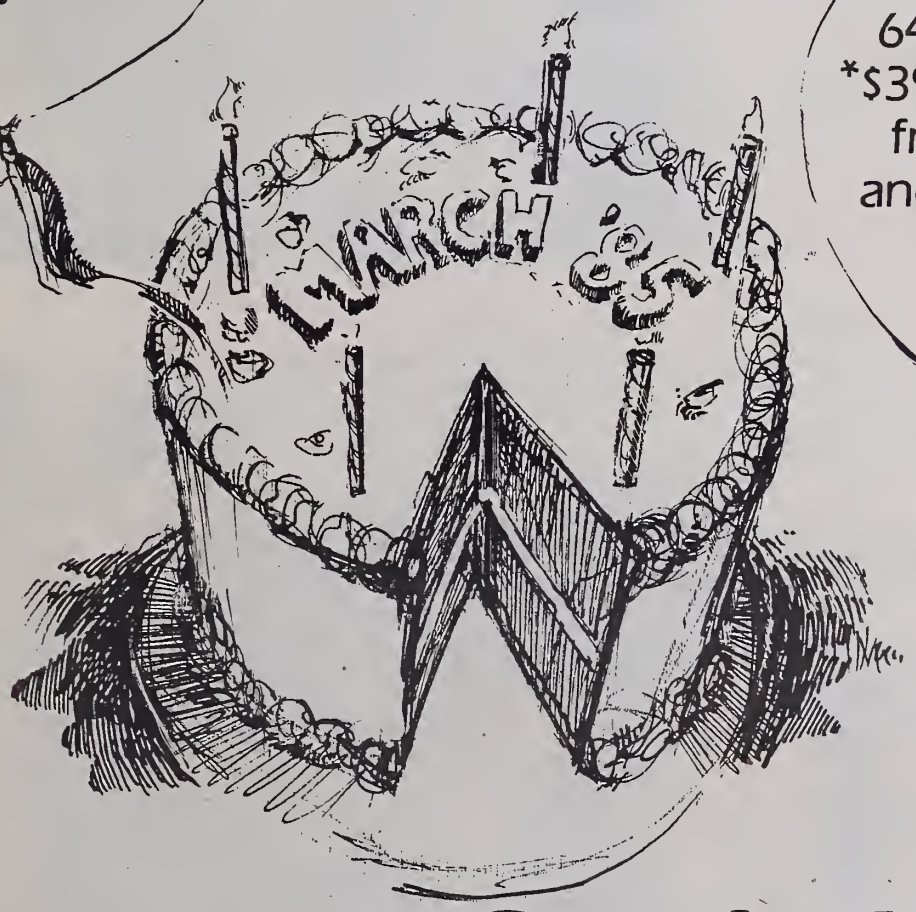

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CONTENTS

In this month's cover story, Jeff Spurrier visits with several system operators who form a part of the burgeoning computer bulletin board scene. Read about their trials and tribulations as well as the sometimes surprising rewards of operating your own BBS. (This, by the way, is an opportune time to point out that MicroTimes offers a *free* listing service for BBS's, so send us your listing!)

In other features, Ken Goehner, who's been a busy man this month, writes about some revolutionary developments in the computer world: an on-line marketing service that provides up-to-the-minute product information on over 7000 products, and a device that brings equally up-to-the-minute stock market quotations to your home computer.

Also, Deborah Wolfgram presents Bank of America's new Home Banking service

And, in the interest of helping all of you to survive this none-too-auspicious time of year, our review section includes a discussion of several income tax programs. Good luck!

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An innovative East Bay company introduces an on-line marketing system with comprehensive product information.

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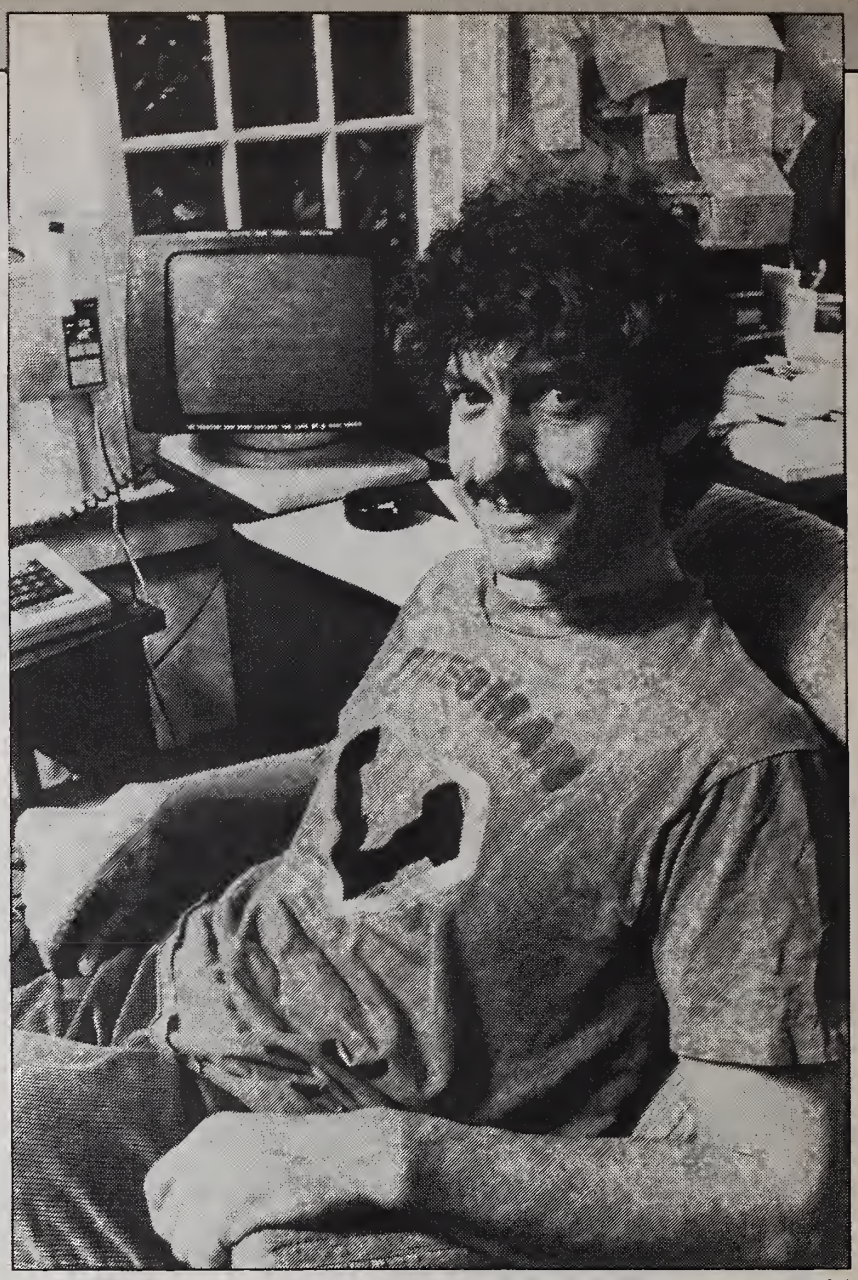

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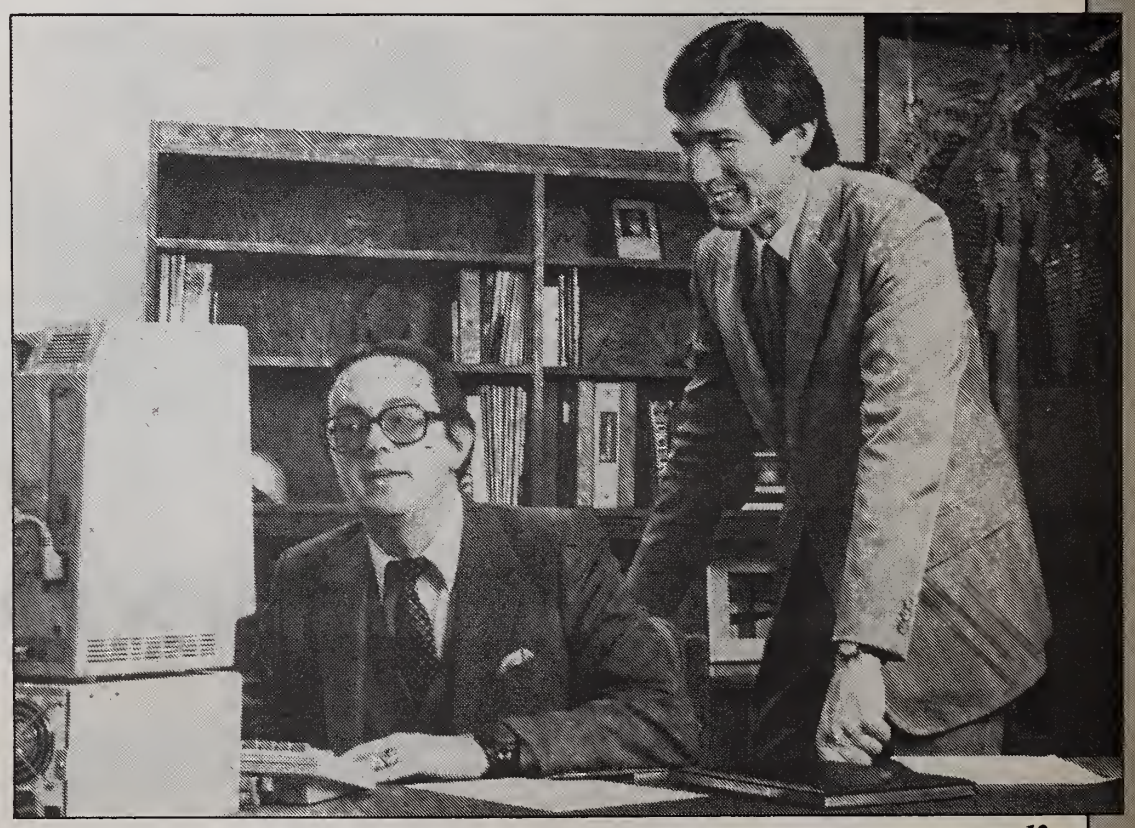

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Cover Photo: Ann Summa
Apologies to Richard McCaffrey, who took last month's cover photo of Barbara Leone.

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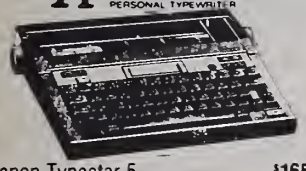

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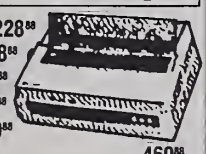

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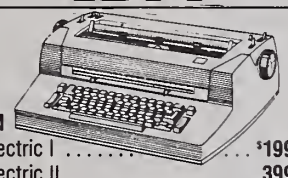

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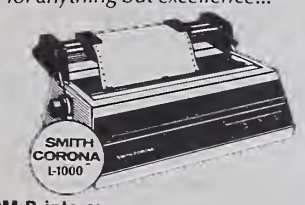

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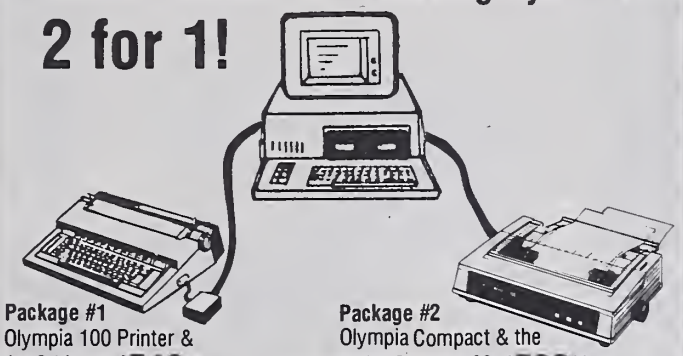

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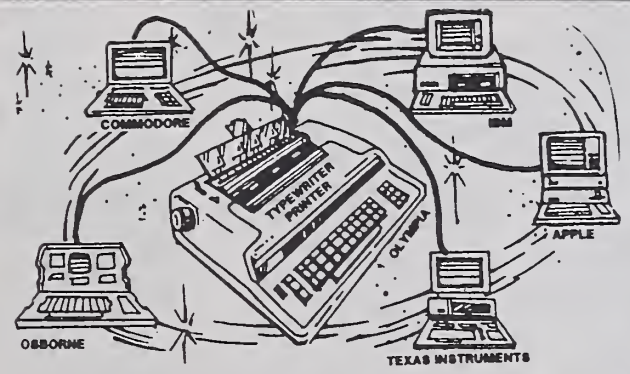

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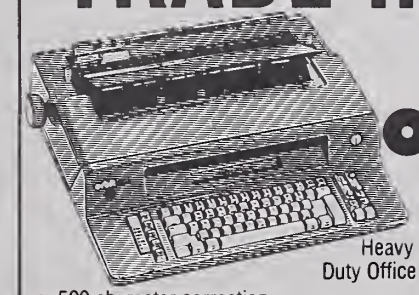

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EDIT MODE

By Don Hamilton

Spreadsheet

A good spreadsheet program can be of enormous value to a computer user. Some of the better programs have database functions, attributes of a word processor, and can be used for the standard cell manipulations, as well as graphics. Some spreadsheet programs cannot be used effectively as just a word processor; however, more than a few businessmen have used all these functions to write proposals.

One consultant I know uses *Lotus 1,2,3* to write his proposals. The time and financial calculations to complete his proposals are done on the same spreadsheet. Graphics help to enhance and clarify his presentation. The database capability is used to organize data. All of the pieces can be combined and merged together to form a very handsome proposal. He has managed to garner several government contracts to date. To do what he does requires the ability to write proposals, and if you have the ability it is a very sellable skill. This consultant charges $75 per hour, and I have seen him write an 80-page proposal over a weekend, winning a lucrative contract for a local small firm.

If *Lotus* doesn't fit into your budget, don't panic! Other, less expensive software is available. Some of the less capable software can be combined with word processor or desk organizing utilities to produce the same results. In fact, many times, a less complicated package is much better, because less complicated software quite often leaves more user RAM available. *Lotus* consumes more memory than some computer users have available on their machines. Many of the new, larger, more complicated spreadsheets suffer from this same limitation. With interchangeable standard files, data and text files can be mixed with other programs to take advantage of the best attributes of each. This approach can result in lower price and greater capability with less memory used. The added complication of trading between systems is sometimes offset by the higher level of difficulty in learning the larger system in the beginning, as many of the functions of the large system will never be utilized.

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Computer Ownership as of December 1984

Thirty percent of the computer-owning households in America own a Commodore. Over 15% own an Apple, with Tandy and Atari fighting for third place with about 10% each. IBM comes in at about 5%. What does this mean? The home market still shops price in their decision-making methodology. Between the East and West Coasts, Atari and Commodore have traditionally had inverse relationships in buying habits. On the East Coast, Commodores were purchased approximately 4 to 1 over Atari. On the West Coast, it was the opposite with 4 to 1 in Atari's favor. Commodore has become the computer of choice in the last year across the nation, even in California.

Racal-Vadic

Racal-Vadic is lowering its prices on the Maxwell Modem line and intends to increase its product warranties to two years. This move will follow R-V's 3.5 million ad campaign launched late last year. The company is attempting to increase their dealer base by demonstrating a high confidence in their product line with their new warranty.

Okimate 120

Okidata has introduced a new dot matrix printer for the Commodore PC's. The Okimate 120 prints bidirectionally with short line-seeking logic at 120 c.p.s. The printer should print 200 million characters between failures.

IBM, Radio Shack and Apple

IBM's 1984 sales reached 50 billion dollars, which is almost a 30% increase over the previous year. If this sounds like a lot to you, you're right! Caspar Weinberger wouldn't even ask for this much money.

With the kind of clout IBM can wield in the market and the new software strategy it seems to be following, some of the software manufacturers will have to consider writing for non-IBM systems. If IBM can manage to stock computer store shelves with its own software on its own money, the smaller software houses will suffer. At first glance this would appear to be a good pump priming strategy,

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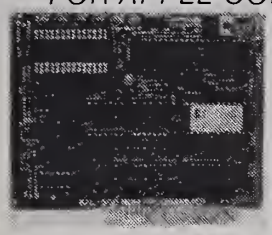

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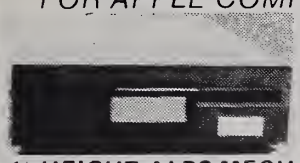

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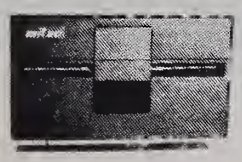

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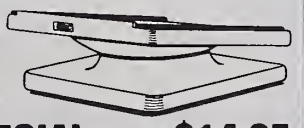

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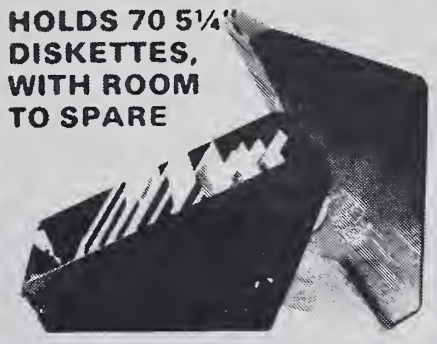

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EDIT MODE

but it also has the possibility of leading to no good. IBM will very quickly dominate the IBM software market and dullness will set in. Creativity will die. Smart software houses will move to the Macintosh, Commodore, Atari, or other alternative systems. The result of the natural free market will be a loss overall for IBM and a gain for other systems. Computer users will drift away from the mundane and unimaginative.

For a comparison, consider the relation in the '70s between Radio Shack and Apple. Who even knew who Apple was? An upstart little company, challenged by the giant Radio Shack, which already had an enormous retail outlet and distribution organization in place.

Looking back, there was a clear winner — Apple. Sure, Radio Shack has continued to grow until recently, but the point remains that they could have driven Apple out of the market had it not been for their stodgy, old-fashioned management. Radio Shack did not want to share information about their system. They didn't allow other companies to sell software through their outlets. The final result was boring systems and boring software. Their store managers very seldom understood anything about computers and almost never knew what the other computer company offered. They were fighting with their hands tied behind their backs. Radio Shack is now trying to remove the stigma through a name change, a better looking product and third party software in its stores.

The most creative innovation in computers and computer software will still come from individuals and innovative organizations, and not from companies that spend their time attempting to squelch criticism and change.

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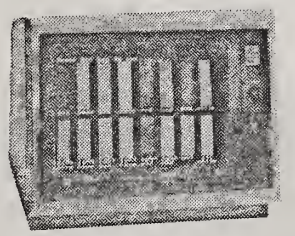

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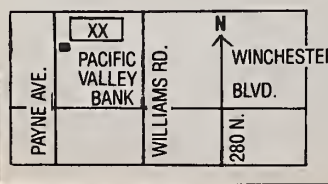

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Apple Sales

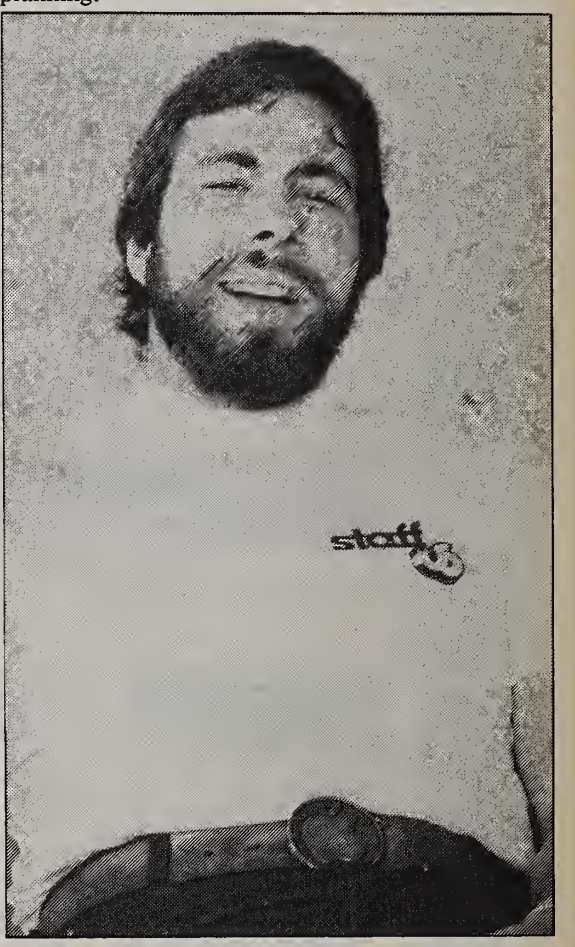
In fiscal 1984 Apple did 1.5 billion dollars in sales. Apple reportedly has reduced the amount it's spending on R&D this year and increased the amount it's spending on advertising and marketing.

If you're a stockholder in Apple, the total shareholder's equity has risen above one half billion dollars, up from a little more than 300 million last year.

Steve Wozniak

Wozniak departs Apple once again to strike out on his own. It is not surprising that a person with as much talent (not to mention money) as Wozniak would quit Apple. It's a surprise he could continue working as an engineer for as long as he did. In a big company like Apple, it's hard to have as much creative control as you might like, even if you are the CEO.

I, for one, will be very interested to see what he is planning.



Steve Wozniak. Photo © Debbie Leavitt

IN RECEIVING

Software Arts

Are you an engineer or a financial analyst? If so, the Software Arts has a new set of templates for use with the *TKISolver* program. If you are not familiar with the *TKSolver* program and do any algebraic manipulation, you should acquaint yourself with this product as soon as possible.

The *TKSolver* program solves for as many unknown values as it can determine. It will solve equations, convert units of measurement, plot graphs, and make tables, thereby increasing your productivity.

To add to the capability of this system and its ease of use, Software Arts is publishing a line of templates. Two that arrived recently are the *Financial Management* and *Mechanical Engineering*. These programs are good professional systems; a must for any mechanical engineer or financial manager.

Spotlight 1.1

The *Spotlight* program continues to be one of the most valuable accessories for your personal computer. With the competition (*SideKick*) moving in fast with aggressive pricing, version 1.1 will keep *Spotlight* in a top spot as a contender of choice for desktop management programs.

Spotlight 1.1 enhancements are as follows:

- Autodialer (supports Hayes and Hayes-compatible modems)
- Color Selection
- The ability to print or file multiple pages in the Appointment Book
- Supports IBM PC AT
- Snow/nosnow options for the color card users

intuit

intuit is published by Noumenon Corp., which calls it a "full function productivity tool." It has the ability to move from task to task at a single keystroke.

The real story behind *intuit* is Noumenon's pricing strategy. They started out with the typical packed functions, high priced package strategy at $300. Due to no sales, they changed their approach. $50 was the next offering, a price at which the product began to move. They raised the price every week until sales stopped. The price at which sales peaked was $90.

This was a novel approach to pricing. If a few other software companies would use the same strategy, we might see more affordable software in the near future. On the other hand, the most sophisticated user will shop features, not price, so a company could still maximize its return on a full featured product by a simple increase in price.

intuit is a file management, text editing, text formatting, database, and spreadsheet program with forms and many other features. It has a four function memory calculator, easy note taking and help screens. *intuit* looks like a good program. The price of the program is currently $89.95.

MusicWorks by Hayden Software

Compose your own music on the Macintosh. Included are two methods to work with: a conventional staff and a keyboard-like grid. You can also continue to listen while you edit your work. You have the option to play an entire song or repeat a selected range. *MusicWorks* provides a choice of eight instruments and twelve different ways to play them, as well as four voices with a composing range of 8 octaves. It also prints your compositions. If you like to compose music, this looks like a program that could justify your purchasing a Macintosh.

The Ancient Art of War

The Ancient Art of War is a new program by Broderbund. This game allows you to pick the battle site, the opponent, time, and many other details, *e.g.* the depth of the river and the speed of the water in the same river.

Do Your Taxes with *Lotus 1,2,3*

This book is a detailed course on *Lotus* and taxes; it contains something on the order of 150 pages of templates. The author suggests that if it seems like too much to enter all the tax forms in by hand on your *Lotus* spreadsheet, they will sell you a disk. Getting a disk sounds like a great idea to me.

The authors sound like they are well qualified and the book looks like it is well written. The best thing the book provides is the answer for those people that complain that the "off-the-shelf" tax programs are not customized enough for them. This program can be customized.

The program features help screens, a menu approach with macros and database, it can handle forms such as 1040, A, B, C, D, G, SE, W.

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ONE POINT'S

Radical Innovations in On Line Computer Information and Marketing

By Ken Goehner

The computer market is, by definition, a volatile and fast paced environment. An average of twelve new hardware and software products are announced each business day. That translates into something on the order of three thousand new products a year, and the number of young entrepreneurs is on the rise. Just keeping track of the names and functions of all these gizmos is a prodigious undertaking; making the most suitable product available for a specific application at the right time and in good order has been the subject of wishful thinking on the part of manufacturers, retailers, and consumers alike.

Enter Stevan Cloudtree and Jonathan Hathaway. In 1982 they formed Interactive Tele-Marketing, a partnership designed to provide online, up-to-date information on new computer systems, peripherals, and business software, distribute the actual products, and provide service contracts, technical training and support to Fortune 2000 companies, universities, and several federal agencies. Their joint effort proved so successful that by 1984 they incorporated under the name of One Point and, in a matter of a year, grew 770% to become an 11.4 million dollar corporation.

This success is in large part due to the vision of Stevan Cloudtree, founder and president of One Point. Cloudtree's qualifications for starting a revolution in computer sales and services began with his education: a BS in Industrial Management with an emphasis on computer science from Purdue University; an MBA at USC, where he graduated at the top of his class; directed studies in the fields of futurology, strategic planning, and consciousness. The latter two pursuits may seem a bit out of place in the 'hard-nosed world of business,' but short-sightedness has been the plague of western civilization since the Industrial Revolution.

As Cloudtree recounts, "A lot of it grew out of my interest in science fiction — I'm an avid reader and I was always real impressed by these people that were always thinking about the future; I thought that for a lot of corporate planning decisions, a two to three year time frame was inadequate. I ultimately got out of that field because everybody kept on saying that today is going to be just like tomorrow." Case in point: Cloudtree's experience with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation. "I was doing some consulting work for them as part of my studies in futurology. They wanted the futurology group to tell them that 'Gee, there are going to be a lot more cars' so they could use this study to wave around and get a lot more money, federal grants and the like, to build lots of new freeways. I came back and said, 'I think this is going to peak, I think we're going to see a lot of new cluster cities out in the suburbs and a lot of businesses moving out of the central hub, more decentralization of where people work, more service businesses out in the suburbs. We've got emerging technologies in telecommunications and computers where ultimately more and more work can be done remotely — it doesn't have to be done in central locations. I wouldn't recommend building any new freeways; I'd recommend building cluster cities and improving your telecommunications.' They didn't like that, so they didn't do anything with that study. It showed me that while I might be ready to study this stuff, people might not be ready to receive it. But I'd developed the knack of looking at the way things were ten years ago and projecting trends out into the future."

If he got out of studying future projections in the classroom, he did not lose his sense of it in business. Cloudtree is a dreamer, a poet in his own right, but he is also a shrewd and accomplished businessman. He has apprenticed to some of the leading business figures in the U.S. and abroad, and has won top national honors for business consulting. Since 1968 he has held numerous upper-level management positions, including Director of Business Development for Realty World and Chief Financial Officer for the Dunbar Corporation.

"I saw a couple of years ago with microcomputers that there was going to be an incredible diversity of products that were going to be available and that people, by and large, did not have the resources to stay familiar with that range of products. A person might be able to know twenty-five different systems, maybe a hundred if he had a photographic memory, but he's not going to know everything, and companies who wanted assistance were going to be very frustrated. I figured, 'Well, I know about computers, I know about databases. Why don't we harness the computer itself to solve the problem of selling and distributing computers?'

"So I wrote up a business plan and showed it to a friend of mine [Jonathan Hathaway] who had been with IBM for a number of years. We had both had micros for a number of years; he knew what they were capable of and could appreciate the problems and frustrations of getting solid information about computer products. He

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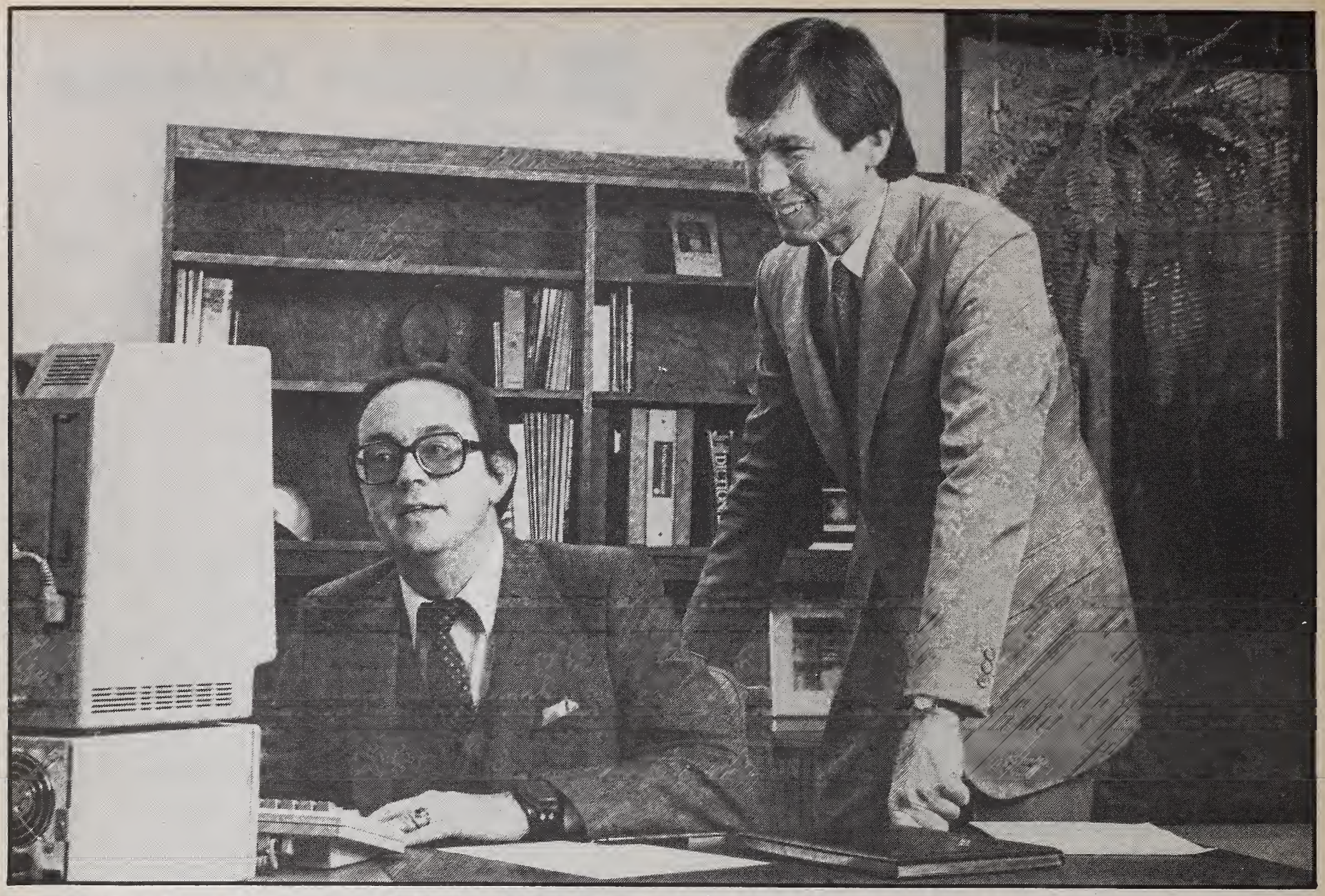

Stevan Cloudtree and Jonathan Hathaway. Photo: Rick Mariani - MediaWest

and I put together the seed capital and formed a partnership."

Cloudtree's partner Jonathan Hathaway, now the Executive Vice-President of One Point, is also a man of unimpeachable credentials. His degree from MIT is in Industrial Management with an emphasis in economics, business administration, and mechanical engineering; he also pursued advanced studies in economics at Harvard and the University of Michigan. He spent more than twenty years in IBM's Data Processing Division in corporate sales, and has been a major figure in several natural resource development programs.

Together Cloudtree and Hathaway formed the core of what has proved to be one of the most potent computer marketing and service organizations in the country. The business has several aspects, the first being "preselection services." At this point they advise clients on micro to mainframe software, how to set up a local area network (LAN), how to manage the micro explosion. They also provide comparative shopping services, bringing vendors on-site for product demonstrations and securing evaluation software. "Mostly what people want is recommendations," says Cloudtree. "They want someone to tell them what they think of this or that. So in order to do that we created an online database that would capture everything we learned about computers, software, and peripherals, from whatever source we learned it from. This gave us incredible productivity leverage — our average salesperson here sells twenty times more than the average retailer sells in terms of software. We are able to take people with no computer background and have them sell to the most sophisticated audience, and make ten times more in a ninety day period than the typical computer salesperson."

He continues, "The second set of services involves the actual servicing of the order. After the firm decides what it is that they want, they turn the order over to their purchasing department. The purchasing agent wants to get it at the best price, he wants it shipped out quickly, he wants somebody with a big inventory, someone that can handle purchase orders and financing. The company may have one agent buying for twenty different locations, and he needs to do business with someone who can accommodate him. Our online service has full ordering and automatic record keeping services, so it allows us to process orders, check the status of orders, all online, and allows us to communicate by electronic mail about these orders.

"The third set of services we offer is in the actual implementation of that software. This is an area where companies have had a lot of problems. Here we're dealing with the corporate user. We're doing things like providing maintenance contracts, training, over-the-phone and in-person problem solving."

In effect, One Point offers impartial evaluation, advice, products at the lowest prices, service contracts, and prompt delivery (70% of all orders are filled within 48 hours) for the full range of Apples, IBM micros and clones, as well as the less common machines, i.e. the TI Professional, the Deck Rainbow, the Wang PC, and the Commodore 64. All this is accessible via modem.

"We have a program we call a 'key' for the IBM and the Macintosh which will automatically get you into the One Point database," says Cloudtree. "You can get online using any terminal program, but the 'key' reduces the log-on procedure to one step. We designed this system for ease of use, especially for the first time user. The command structure we have allows you to back and forth from menu to menu, which makes it real easy to find anything you're interested in, even if you don't know exactly what you're looking for. You simply go from broad general category menus to more refined menus till you find what you want, with a single keystroke per category selection. Searches can also be conducted by using about 540 keywords which are fairly self explanatory, but to avoid any confusion there is an onboard glossary which you can call up anytime that will explain exactly how we are using any given keyword.

"When you've found the product you're interested in checking out, you can select 'Product Description.' We've had about 75,000 selling situations, so we have a pretty good idea of what kind of questions people are going to ask."

The system is also useful to the retailer, says Cloudtree: "If he

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STAR MICRONICS SG-10 VS. EPSON RX-80F/T

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3. THE SG-10 CONTAINS THE IBM CHARACTER SETS 1 & 2. THE RX-80F/T DOES NOT. THIS MEANS THE EPSON PRINTER (ANY MODEL, FOR THAT MATTER) IS NOT 100% IBM-GRAPHICS COMPATIBLE, WHILE THE SG-10 IS.
4. THE SG-10 HAS A NEAR LETTER-QUALITY MODE. THE RX-80F/T DOES NOT.
5. THE SG-10 DOES THE IBM 12X6 GRAPHICS. THE RX-80F/T DOES NOT. SAME RESULT AS NUMBER 4 ABOVE.
6. THE SG-10 DOES N/144 LINE SPACING. THE RX-80F/T DOES NOT.
7. THE SG-10 HAS A LIST PRICE OF $299. THE RX-80F/T+ LISTS FOR $369.

STAR MICRONICS SG-15 VS. EPSON RX-100

1. THE SG-15 HAS A PRINT SPEED OF 120 CPS, WHILE THE RX-100 HAS A PRINT SPEED OF ONLY 100 CPS.
2. THE SG-15 HAS A 16K BUFFER (EQUIVALENT TO 8 PAGES OF TEXT), WHILE THE RX-100 DOES NOT EVEN HAVE A 2K BUFFER.
3. THE SG-15 CONTAINS THE IBM CHARACTER SETS 1 & 2. THE RX-100 DOES NOT. SAME EFFECT AS THE RX-80F/T.
4. THE SG-15 HAS A NEAR LETTER-QUALITY MODE. THE RX-100 DOES NOT.
5. THE SG-15 DOES THE IBM 12X6 GRAPHICS. THE RX-100 DOESN'T.
6. THE SG-15 DOES N/144 LINE SPACING. THE RX-100 DOES NOT.

STAR MICRONICS SD-10 VS. EPSON FX-80

1. THE SD-10 HAS A FULLY-ADJUSTABLE TRACTOR FEED, WHILE THE TRACTOR ON THE FX-80 IS NOT FULLY-ADJUSTABLE.
2. THE SD-10 CONTAINS THE IBM CHARACTER SETS 1 & 2, WHILE THE FX-80 DOES NOT.
3. THE SD-10 HAS A NEAR LETTER-QUALITY MODE, WHILE THE FX-80 DOES NOT.
4. THE SD-10 DOES THE IBM 12X6 GRAPHICS. THE FX-80 DOES NOT.
5. THE SD-10 DOES N/144 LINE SPACING. THE FX-80 DOES NOT.
6. THE SD-10 LISTS FOR $449. THE FX-80+ LISTS FOR $569.
7. SPEED, BUFFER SIZE, INTERFACE, AND MOST EVERYTHING ELSE, ARE ABOUT THE SAME ON BOTH PRINTERS.

STAR MICRONICS SD-15 VS. EPSON FX-100

1. THE SD-15 HAS A 16K BUFFER, WHILE THE FX-100 HAS ONLY A 2K BUFFER.
2. THE SD-15 HAS A FULLY-ADJUSTABLE TRACTOR FEED, WHILE THE FX-100 DOES NOT.
3. THE SD-15 CONTAINS BOTH IBM CHARACTER SETS 1 & 2, WHILE THE FX-100 DOES NOT.
4. THE SD-15 HAS A NEAR-LETTER QUALITY MODE. THE FX-100 DOESN'T.
5. THE SD-15 DOES THE IBM 12X6 GRAPHICS. THE FX-100 DOES NOT.
6. THE SD-15 DOES N/144 LINE SPACING. THE FX-100 DOES NOT.
7. PRINT SPEED, INTERFACE, AND MOST EVERYTHING ELSE ARE ABOUT THE SAME ON BOTH PRINTERS.
8. THE SD-15 LISTS FOR $599 , WHILE THE FX-100+ LISTS FOR $849.

STAR MICRONICS SR-15 VS. EPSON LQ-1500

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4. THE SR-15 CONTAINS BOTH IBM CHARACTER SETS 1 & 2, WHILE THE LQ-1500 DOES NOT.
5. THE SR-15 DOES THE IBM 12X6 GRAPHICS. THE LQ-1500 DOES NOT.
6. THE SR-15 DOES N/144 LINE SPACING. THE LQ-1500 DOES NOT.
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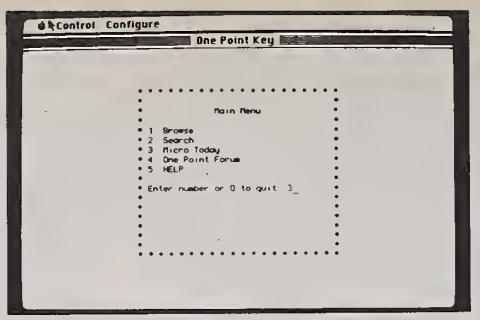
wanted to check to see which distributor was selling something to him for the best price, he could. With this system, a customer could walk into a store and express interest in, say, an architectural design package. That's not a common item in most stores, but all the salesperson has to do is summon up the information on a machine, and he's equipped to answer any questions on that genre of software, as well as make specific recommendations. What we've found with retailers that use this is that their sales have gone up anywhere from 11 to 25%. It was originally designed as a back office tool for telemarketing purposes or as a research tool, but several stores are finding it very effective as a point-of-sale device.

"Our online database service handles about 7000 products and gives us a consulting capability to handle pre-sales selection. We act as a storehouse of information from a variety of sources. Typically — say using the example of *Lotus 1-2-3* — online we would have the standard format: price, a description that would be taken from Lotus's product literature and documentation, written up in terms of what this product does, and then supplement that with what we've learned about the product. We have our own evaluators here who have looked at the product and rated it. We also extract reviews from other publications and summarize and reference them. We have comments and feedback from people we've sold the product to; when we ship out a product, we also send out a questionnaire that says 'please, after you've used this product, let us know how you feel about it.' We take that and tabulate it and feed it into our database. As part of this we will send out a product prior to the sale for the customer to evaluate, with the provision on our products. For example, we have a listing of all the printers that *Lotus* works with — lack of that kind of knowledge accounts for about 40% of all consumer service problems."

One Point also has a unique interactive online magazine, *Micro Today*, dedicated to new products, reviews, interviews, news, and articles on the computer industry. In addition, it sports a bulletin board called "Dear One Point," an events calendar, and "Alert Station!," a "column" that deals with the whys and wherefores of bugs in released programs. Features are written daily and the magazine is updated weekly. It is, in effect, a wire service, dealing with what's what and who's who in the computer industry in an up-to-the-minute fashion.



One Point menu display on MacIntosh. Photo: Rick Mariani - MediaWest

"What we've found," says Cloudtree, "is that new products go through about four stages. When a product is first announced, we put out the information available in our magazine. That alerts our subscribers that the thing does exist. Then, when the products are introduced, we evaluate them, review those we think are the strongest and start looking for other feedback. We go to the publishers and see if anybody else has looked at this thing and what they said. We put out some evaluation copies, and we see what the response is. Then we install the results in our databases. If the product is successful and matures, then you've got a whole lot of user comments; we get a whole list of the particulars of the products and they go into the database. Finally, if the product doesn't work out, or gets revised, then it gets put into the archives as a no go or as being replaced by some other product.

"We concentrate now on announcement level and first introduction. That seems to be when people are most interested. After the product matures, you can go into any retail store and there will be someone there that can tell you about it. We try to get information from a variety of sources and edit it and try to present it as objectively as possible — here's what the reviewers said about it, what some of the industry users said, what we had to say about it — everything we can do to allow the consumer to make an enlightened decision."

Generally, corporations and retailers pay to use One Point's services, but according to Cloudtree there are instances where a distributor will subsidize a retailer's use of the system. First Software, a major distributor, offers One Point as a major selling point to prospective clients, pointing out that it makes new employees almost instantly productive, reduces the need for a large inventory, and processes orders efficiently. "First Software thinks these are the kinds of services that will endear it to its retailers, and will get more retailers to deal with them," says Cloudtree. "So somebody is always paying for the service, but not necessarily the outfit that's using it."

One Point is also extending its operations into the print medium. From the information we've gathered, we're in a great position to produce books that compare and contrast software," Cloudtree reasons. "We've got a pretty nice contract with Hayden Books, and we'll be putting out eight books this year. The first book is going to be on investment management software, then databases, accounting packages, integrated software, word processing, spreadsheets, business graphics, and data communications packages. Basically what were doing is looking at families of products, using a benchmark product for compare and contrast purposes. For word processors, we used *Wordstar* as a basis of comparison. Then we picked thirty different products representative of several different technologies. The Hayden reviewer sent us a note after looking at the book that said 'this book is so complete it actually eliminates the need to look at a demo in order to make an informed choice.' I think that says a lot.

"Part of the reason for doing the books is that we can gain some recognition for the quality of the work we've done. We feel that a lot of people are still more familiar with the print form than they are with the online services, and we're getting our name out, being associated with this kind of high quality information, and making a point of mentioning in the book that the information in the book is current as of the publishing date, but if you want up to the minute information, we have this online service..."

Unlike most business-oriented distributors, One Point does not specialize solely in IBM compatible equipment. On Cloudtree's desk is perched the friendly shape of a Macintosh. "Personally I'm very excited about the Macintosh. I think that Apple's strategy of ease of use is a very, very effective way to compete. Look at the number of cars equipped with automatic transmissions versus the number of stick shifts. People buy automatics because they're easier to drive; you still get to where you want to go — it's just easier. Apple has approached us about being an evaluated resaler for the Macintosh line into corporations, because they've been relatively disappointed in their own efforts to reach the corporate market, and we've been really effective in that area. That's really our big focus. As a matter of fact, we were recently in that area. That's really our big focus. As a matter of fact, we were recently approached by one of the people at Apple's regional office from the Rocky Mountains area. He took a look through our databases and found that we had more software titles for the Macintosh than he knew about from Apple. He immediately signed up for our online service and spread the word to other regional offices.

"The same thing happened with IBM. They're talking to us about using our database in their offices. IBM is a little peculiar in that they develop a lot of software in-house, so they're very shy — like if somebody in the company buys a database product, and somebody else in the company produces a database product that was similar, IBM is very sensitive to the idea that someone may come back to them and charge them with plagiarism. So for them it's very important to know what everybody else is doing so they can avoid any accidental replication of another company's work and conceivable lawsuits."

All in all, One Point is living up to its creator's vision. "The basic idea that this company was founded around was as much to solve a business problem as it was to create a kind of a win-win situation," Cloudtree reflects. "I wanted to perform a service that was going to help people as well as operate a business consistent with everything that I have learned is valuable in life in terms of dealing with people — being straightforward and creating opportunities for personal growth. I thought that was the kind of environment I wanted to find myself in, and I felt that those were totally consistent goals. I feel that you can have a spiritual orientation and still be fully in the world, do business, make returns on profits and give people careers and jobs. It's that kind of orientation and commitment that's brought a large group of exciting, high energy people together here. We've got a grand idea, we're helping a lot of people, and we're pioneering a lot of new ideas. The people here feel real good about what they're doing and where they're going both as individuals and as a group." □

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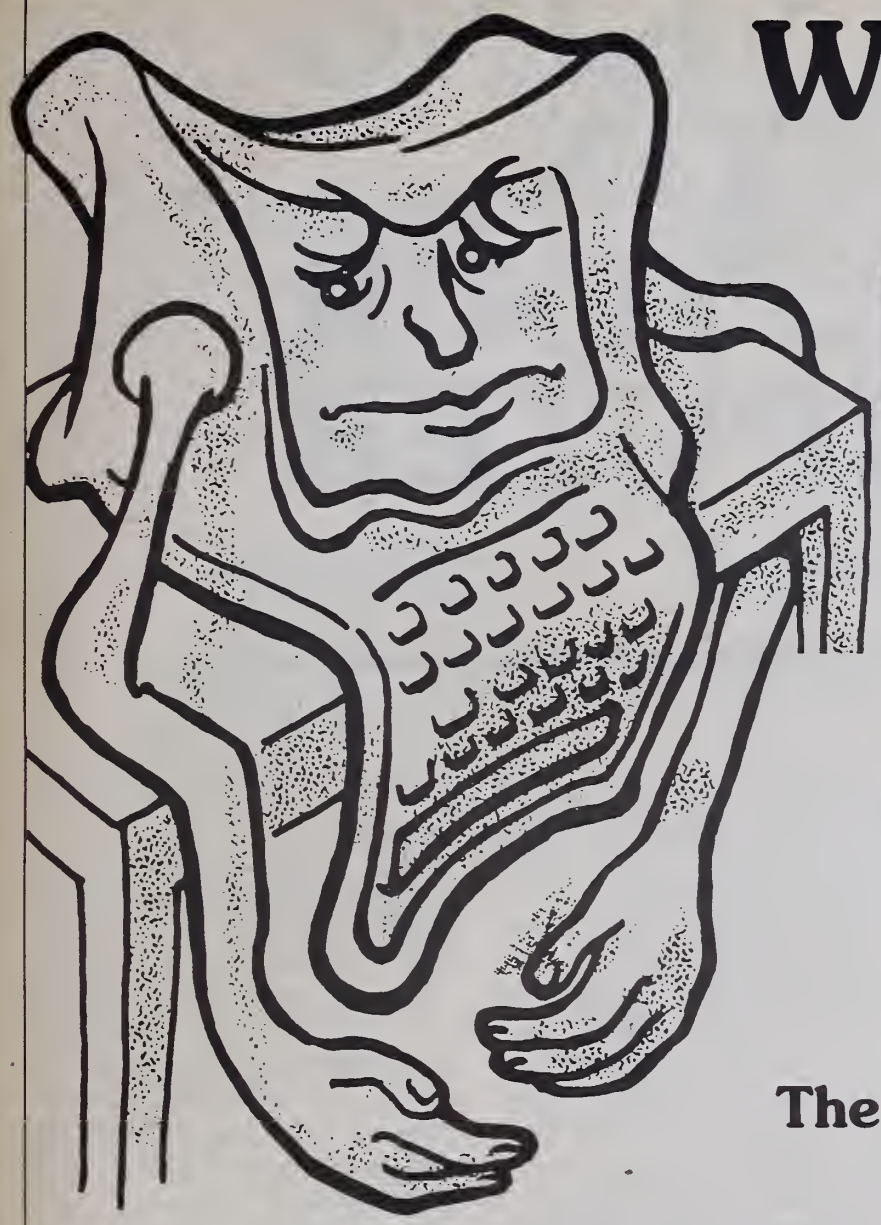

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BANKING ON YOUR COMPUTER

Finally there is a productive and genuinely worthwhile use for your personal computer at home: Home Banking. The future has arrived and the computer age is coming into your home.

By Deborah D. Wolfgram

Virtually all of us have to go through the same drudgery of ordering checks, filling out checks, buying stamps and stuffing return envelopes. We also have to rely upon the postal service to deliver the payment in a reasonable amount of time, which can be difficult during peak mailing seasons. Now there is an easier method. Bank of America is the first to offer the Home Banking program, an electronic service by which you can pay bills, transfer funds, check bank statements and query for current account balances. All of this can be done in the privacy of your home, at your leisure, seven days a week.

According to Bank of America's Marketing Representative Kevin Gordon, Home Banking began in Northern California in November of 1983. Since then the number of subscribers has grown to almost 20,000 and the number of payees (creditors) now exceeds 1,000. The System is expanding rapidly, gaining tremendous momentum.

Here is a quick review what is needed to get started:

(1) A computer equipped with communication hardware
(2) A modem (300 to 1200 baud will work)
(3) Communication software which can run at full duplex and at even or no parity.
(4) A Bank of America Versatel account (which is also operable on the automated teller machines)
(5) A Bank of America Home Banking Account

There are many advantages to Home Banking. The hours are convenient - 6 a.m. to midnight, 7 days a week. The System has been in use now for just over one year and has proven to be reliable. Getting started is easy; just contact any Bank of America branch for more information.

The Main Menu of the Home Banking System offers seven features:

1. PAY BILLS
2. TRANSFER FUNDS
3. BALANCE INQUIRY
4. REVIEW OR CANCEL
5. ELECTRONIC STATEMENT
6. ELECTRONIC MAIL
7. ACCOUNT MAINTENANCE

Before we go any further, let's briefly describe each of the above features.

The first and probably most commonly used function is to pay bills. It is the core of the Home Banking System. You, the user, are given the flexibility of selecting which checking or savings account is used for bill paying. The System has saved your creditor account numbers to which the payments are applied, which saves you from having to continually enter credit card account numbers. You then enter the date on which the bill will be paid. The System allows the pay date of a payment to be up to one month from the current date. This is quite handy if you are not available to pay bills in the near future (for example, on vacation). Upon verification of the entered information the System returns a transaction number, which can then be entered in your check register.

The next feature allows the transfer of funds between your Bank of America accounts (checking, savings, VISA and MasterCard). This feature allows you to shift funds to cover checks at the latest possible time, thus maximizing interest income.

The third feature is the ability to query current balances on all of your Bank of America accounts, including checking, savings, VISA and MasterCard accounts.

The fourth feature is the option to review and/or cancel any of your electronic bill payments and transfers made within the past month and those scheduled for processing in the month ahead. You are able to cancel any unprocessed transaction.

The fifth feature of the System is the ability to step through the monthly statement on your Bank of America checking and savings accounts to verify what checks and deposits have cleared the accounts. (The posting of transactions to the electronic statement lags one to two days.)

The sixth feature is electronic mail. At this time the only place to which you can send mail is the Versatel Center. You can ask questions on virtually any banking subject and the mail will be forwarded appropriately. Responses to your questions will be sent back to you via electronic mail and you will be informed of pending mail immediately following your logon to the System.

The seventh feature is account maintenance. It allows you to update your list of payees. New names are constantly being added to the master list and this feature permits you to maintain a current list of payees. The feature can enhance your efficiency in searching for a particular payee by providing two paths of querying: by payee name or by date of addition to the System.

The greatest advantage of Home Banking is its ease of use and amount of time saved over the conventional method of bill paying. The best testimony to this statement is an example. Let's pay the phone bill.

The first step is to call a local Tymnet phone number provided by Bank of America. and log on to the Home Banking System. The logon is partly provided by Bank of America and partly comprised of your Versatel card number and secret passcode. Once the System has verified your logon you are welcomed to the Home Banking Main Menu.

**** MAIN MENU ****
0.LOGOFF
1.PAY BILLS
2.TRANSFER FUNDS
3.BALANCE INQUIRY
4.REVIEW OR CANCEL
5.ELECTRONIC STATEMENT
6.ELECTRONIC MAIL
7.ACCOUNT MAINTENANCE
?.COMMAND (CMD) LIST

Since you are paying bills, enter the number "1" and press the return key. The System returns and asks you to select the account from which the funds will be withdrawn to pay the bill.

SELECT A BILL
PAYING ACCOUNT
1. ACCOUNT 11111-12345 CHK
2. ACCOUNT 11111-67890 CHK

You are given the choice of using any of your checking or savings accounts that are linked to your Home Banking Account. Above there are two checking accounts from which you can pay this bill. Suppose you wish to pay from the second account. Enter the number "2" and press the return key.

The next step is to choose the bill which is to be paid. Six choices of bills are listed on the screen at a

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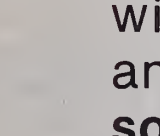

The Picture Menu offers easy access to the six areas of activity.

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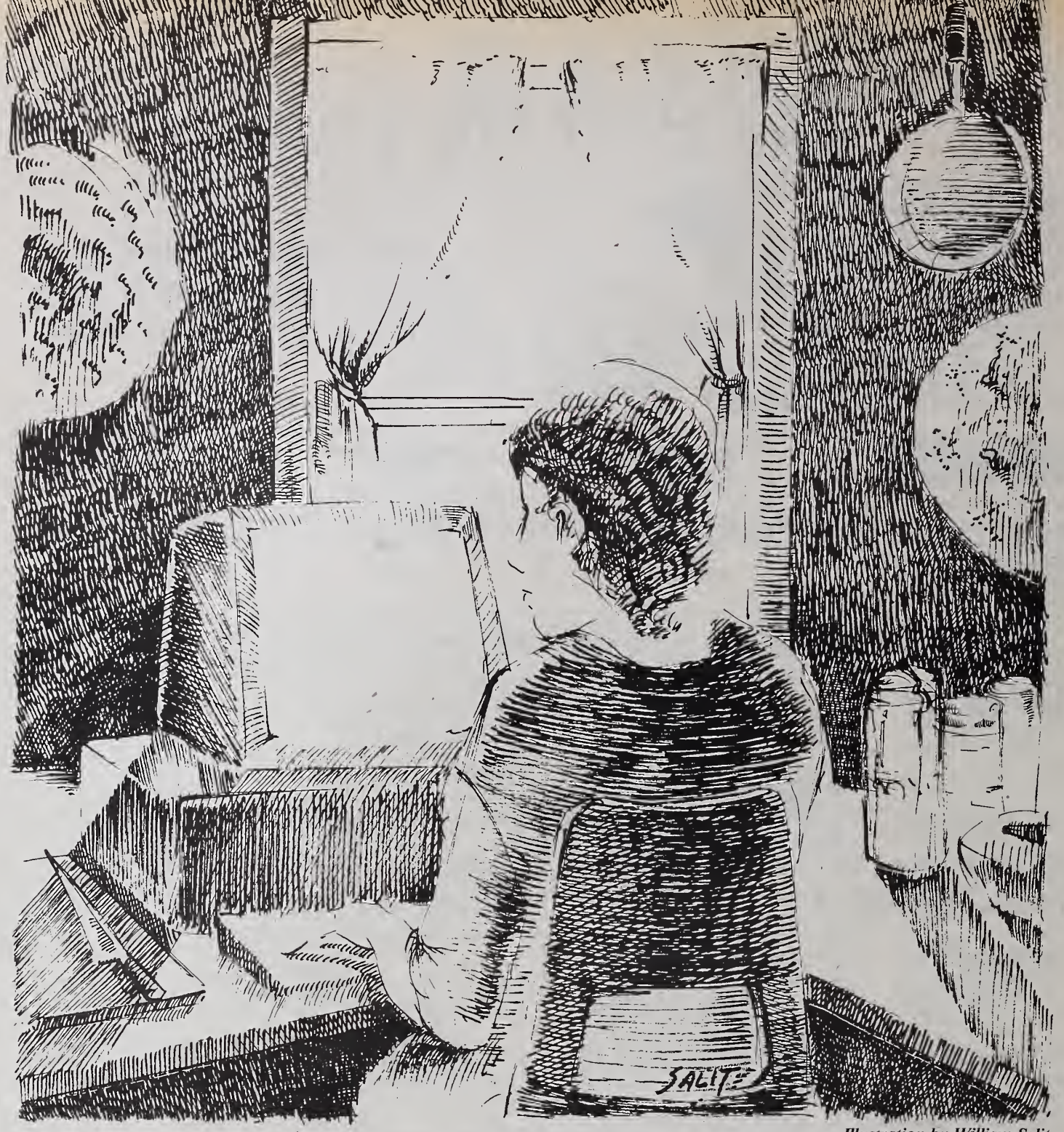

Illustration by William Salit

time. If the bill you wish to pay is not one of the six, simply enter "p" and press return for the next page which contains the next six choices. When you have spooled to the page with the phone company the screen will appear something like the following.

PAY FROM 11111-67890
SELECT A PAYEE OR
P FOR NEXT PAGE

1. **SO CAL EDISON CO**
   12345678901234567JONES
2. **SEARS**
   1112223334449
3. **PAC BELL-SOUTH**
   9995458100111

The bill you are going to pay is your Pacific Bell Telephone bill (choice number 3). Enter the number "3" and press the return key.

Next you are asked to enter a processing date. This date may be up to one month ahead from the current date. Suppose you want to pay your phone bill today. In this situation you can take a short-cut and simply enter a "T" for today's date and press the return key.

The last bit of information to be entered is the amount. The only limitation is that the amount must be less than $10,000.00. If the phone bill totals $34.78 then enter "34.78" and press the return key.

All of the information has now been entered and you are asked to verify the transaction.

FROM 11111-67890
PAY PAC BELL-SOUTH
9995458100111
ON 03/14/85 $34.78
PLEASE CONFIRM
Y OR N:

If all of the above information is correct then respond by entering a "y" and press the return key. The System then logs the transaction information and responds with a transaction number (which is similar to a check number) and asks if there will be another transaction. Enter a "n" and press the return key. The System returns to the main command menu and awaits another instruction. Since you have finished enter a "0" to logoff and press return. The phone bill has now been paid.

For many people a major concern is the protection of the account's information and money. Some people may ask about computer "hackers" who will try incessantly to break into an account. Bank of America has a rigid protection system. With four levels in the logon procedure, the chance of getting the correct and unique combination is small. This is little comfort when news breaks of teenagers breaking in illegally to a corporate computer system. But Bank of America has demonstrated concern over the protection of its depositors' accounts. The Bank of America System allows three attempts and after the third incorrect try the account is restricted and no one can logon to that account.

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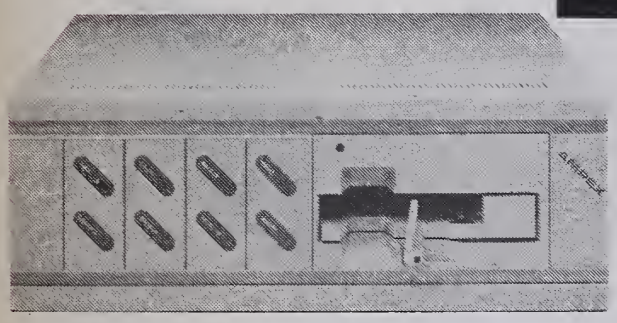

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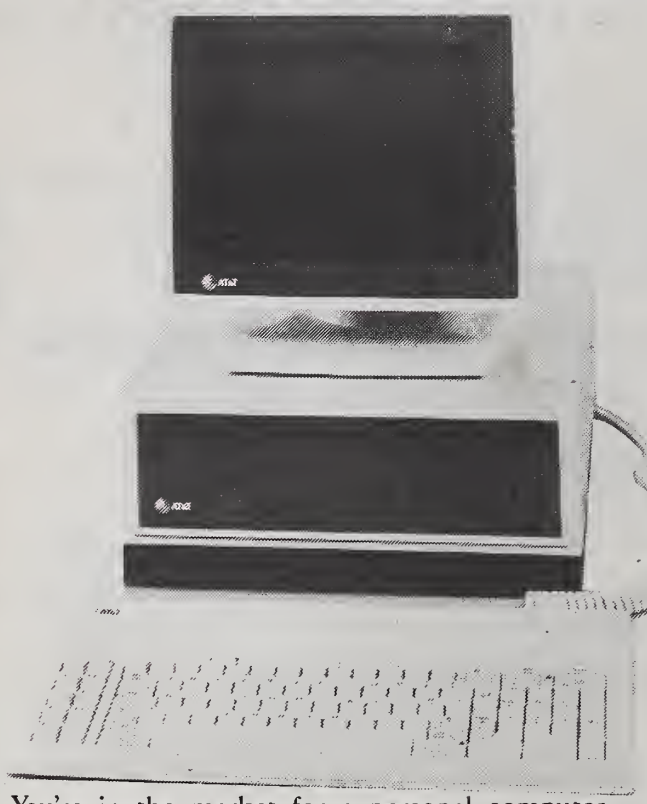

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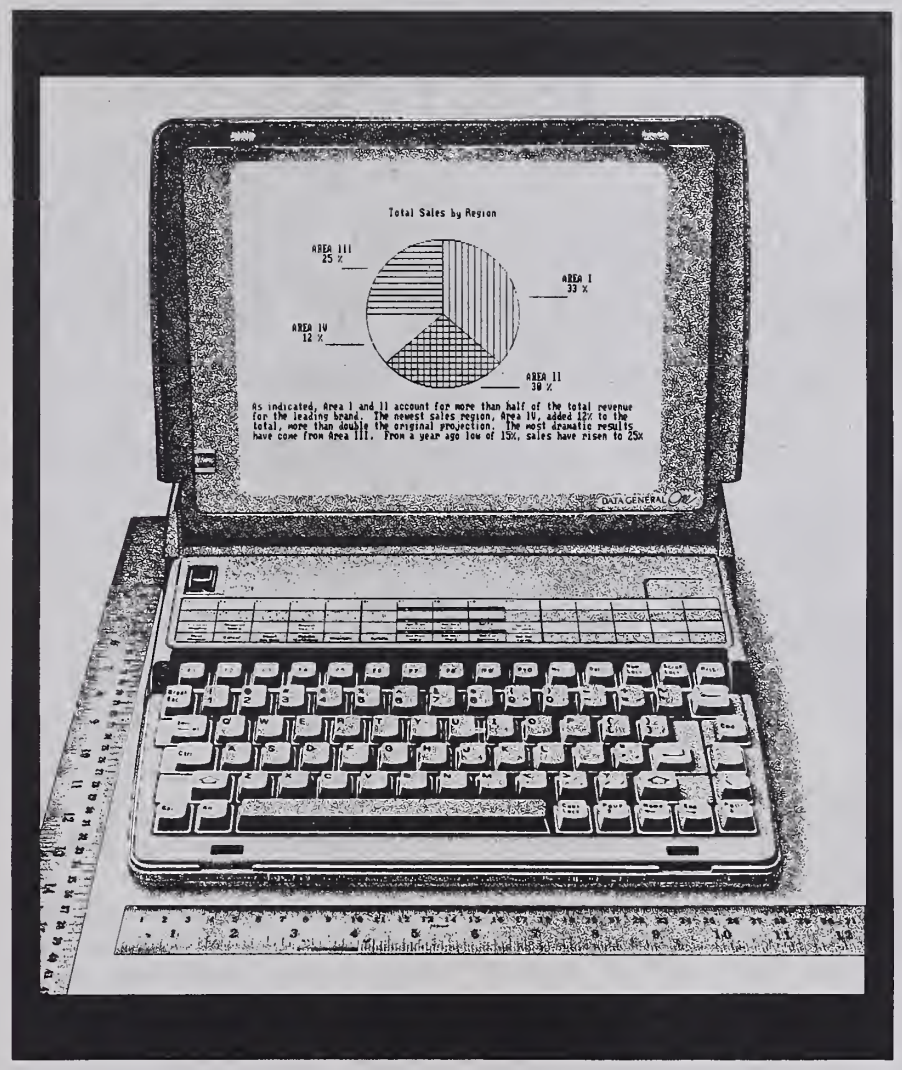
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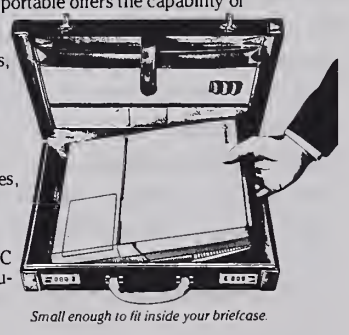

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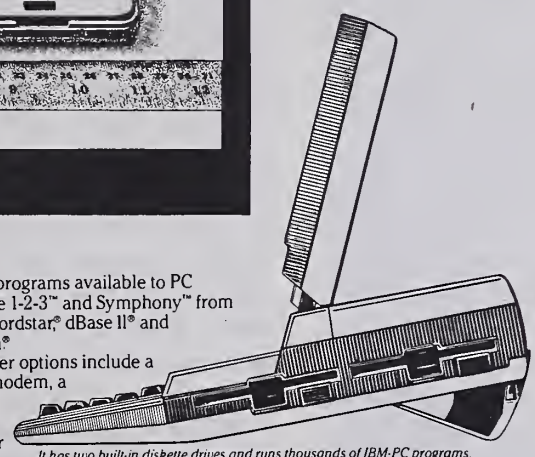

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BBS LAND

WARNING!

Owners of personal computers who don't have modems should not read this article. It's likely to make you sick with envy . . .

By Jeff Spurrier

One glance through a list of electronic bulletin board systems around Southern California is enough to convince anyone that when it comes to indulging one's computer fantasies, it's hard to beat the world of BBSing. Where else could you find passage to electronic hangouts like De Creepo BBS, Phantom Late Night, Syslave, Hustler's Hideout, Fricaseed Chicken, Trash Compactor, Dark Domain, Ground Zero, Beyond War, House of Usher, Keyboard Cafe, Lusty Lady, Your Average BBS, Sit Back and Wackit, Pig Sty, etc., etc.?

Seven years ago the first computer BBS went on-line, reportedly thanks to the efforts of Chicagoans Ward Christensen — of Christensen Protocol — and Randy Seuss. That first board (which according to author Alfred Glossbrenner is still functional at 312-546-8086) was designed to be a message center for members of a computer club.

These days, one hardly needs an excuse to start up a BBS. Computers and modems are cheaper than ever and public domain BBS software is available. About the only inhibiting factor is the prospect of higher phone bills (and you know phone service is *not* going to get cheaper).

While the cost of maintaining a BBS is not prohibitive, there is a certain mental commitment involved — as well as the loss of one's free time. After all, no one gets rich being a sysop (system operator) and yet as the following profiles illustrate, there are rewards — and dangers — in the land of the raging BBS.

"There's always somebody there, always something going on, always a new challenge," says Steve Huntley, sysop of "Los Angeles Communication System" (213-935-7570). "There's always something to do when you get home. It's way beyond an answering machine."

With 12,000 "serious" calls coming in a year, that would seem to be an understatement. Huntley has a list of 380 users that call at least once a month and 150 that call weekly — one from as far away as Australia. What's the attraction that would warrant weekly trans-Pacific calls?

"It's the transfer of public domain programs that are out as well as new ideas and help," he says. "The board is a wall to bounce your ideas off of. Just about everyone that comes on has some expertise in something — BASIC, word processing, C programming. If you've got a problem and you put it up there, usually there's an answer within a few days. I try to answer everyone who leaves me a message."

With his day job as an audio engineer at Paramount Studios — he handles the sound for *Entertainment Tonight* — Huntley has found that he has to budget his time carefully to handle all the various uploads/downloads and requests for aid from novice BBSers. (He recently bought an Epson PX-8 lap computer to help him clear out his mail on the two-megabyte Kaypro board at home.) And unlike some sysops, Steve Huntley welcomes first-timers.

"That's how I learned to use computers," he explains. "I got hooked up to some guys that were hacking and had BBS's of their own. I learned in six months what would have taken me five years on my own. It's a kick to see people that couldn't upload or download when I started over two years ago and now I'm calling them for help. Now they're off into *DBase* or something and I feel like I helped get them started by giving them files on certain things or hooking them up with someone. There's no inexpensive help out there."

The high cost of computer education is one reason that Huntley keeps his board free. "Charging money would defeat the reason I put the board up — which was to help people who are new at it," he says. "That's why we're there, or why I'm there, to promote it, to make people less afraid of it. Some of the public domain stuff is such a learning experience."

Unfortunately, he adds, some of his callers don't understand the purpose of the board and try to upload copyrighted software for exchange.

"I keep a close eye on my board. Some guy will try to upload *Wordstar* to my machine for another guy to download to his format. No good. That's heavy copyright stuff and I could get into big trouble. They'll name some file 'bubblehead' and I go to see what it really is and it's *Wordstar* or *DBase*. So now anything that gets uploaded goes into a private area where I can check it out before other people see it."

Pirated programs is just one problem that Huntley has to deal with. The recent attempted prosecution of sysop Tom Tcimpidis by Pacific Bell is "scary," he says. (Tcimpidis was being prosecuted by Pacific Bell after a stolen telephone credit card number appeared on his board from an anonymous caller. The case has resulted in declarations of "electronic freedom of speech" from many sysops and magazine editors. In mid-February, the case was dismissed.)

"[Pacific Bell] is trying to make us, the sysops, responsible for what's on the board," says Huntley. "We're providing a public service. They're trying to stop the hackers, the phreakers, the guys who hand out telephone numbers to secret boards. There are boards that travel from house to house and only set up for a few days, maybe 100 calls. They're getting MCI numbers, credit card numbers, access codes into TRW. It's kids getting one over on the system. It's an electronic thrill for them. I get my thrills by helping people."

As if would-be pirates and corporate pressure weren't enough, there are also callers whose sole goal seems to be wanton destruction of the board.

"I've had kids who spend three or four hours on the machine trying to break it down, trying to erase files or break into private areas," says Huntley with a grin. "They try to delete everything or steal my BBS program. It's a trip watching them. There's one kid that has used 38 different names now. I can recognize him by his typing style."

Like many sysops, Huntley takes it all in stride. The mischief caused by kids is clearly secondary to the pleasure he gets from running the board.

"I don't make any money off it but it's very rewarding," he says. "Every day I help someone or learn something. It keeps me stimulated. There's a lot of give and take. On holidays when no one calls I get depressed.

"You get to meet a lot of people that you never really meet. It sort of breaks down a barrier for the eggheads of the world who have no one to talk to — people who couldn't hold a face to face conversation with someone. But in this medium they don't have to. They can type and hide behind the keyboard. I've met some of these people who can't look you in the eye but over a keyboard they're the greatest conversationalists in the world."

Lynzie Flynn, sysop of "Lynzie's Mother Board" (818-980-6482) in north Hollywood, quite likely would disagree with Steve Huntley. Where the L.A. Communication System exists as a place to learn and exchange programs, the Mother Board is a board that encourages actual get-together. Flynn regularly holds parties and monthly meetings for the subscribers to her system.

"Everyone has pre-conceived notions about what other BBSers are like," says Flynn. "They're just

Steve Huntley, Photo: © Ann Summa

like you or me. Normal people. I'm trying to offer something for everyone here."

The Mother Board is clearly a multi-interest board. Among its various sub-boards are an advice column, two employment exchanges (one just for people in the entertainment industry), a technical forum, a writer's discussion group, a wordplay board, a games board, a list of local activities, a for sale/barter/trade board, a Sci-fi board, reviews, and two dating boards — one gay and one straight.

Matching boards — BBS systems that feature dating facilities — have received a goodly quantity of sensationalist press recently. Stories have appeared in such non-computer outlets as *Hustler*, *The Village Voice*, *Playboy*, and *California*. Although the image of mutual computerized masturbation might make good copy, the truth (at least on the Mother Board) is somewhat different.

"This is not the sort of board where people write 'Hi, I just blew into town and this is my first time on the system. Why don't you write me,' " says Don Tsuchiyama, Flynn's co-sysop and technical advisor. "[On the dating board] there was a very long discussion up there about the nature of relationships between men and women. It's more that than a discussion of who is out to meet who. The people on Lynzie's board tend to be very secure. They may be single but they're not desperate. I think she's cultivated a better class of user than on most BBS systems because this is not a very juvenile board."

"I cater to a group of people that are 25 to 50 years old," adds Flynn. "I discourage kids. That's part of the reason I'm a pay system. They don't want to pay. People on my board are mature intelligent people that are not necessarily looking for anything other than a place to express themselves. Most people log on without any intention of ever meeting other people, but they find they're interesting, so they start leaving messages, and many come to my parties to meet the people they've been writing to."

The subscription fee for the Mother Board, $25, is stiff by most private, non-commercial, BBS standards. It's a one-time only charge, notes Flynn, and a necessary evil.

"I'm doing this for love, not money," she says. "The reason I charge is to keep the kids and the hackers off . . . anybody who's just looking to fool around. They're the ones who have caused most of the problems on BBS systems. I'm really opposed to pirating or phreaking over the systems. It puts me in a very uncomfortable position when people ask me if I know any phreaking or pirating numbers. I just cut them off. I don't want to know about it. It's the same reason I don't buy stolen merchandise. I don't want to support it. It may be my credit card they use next."

Lynzie Flynn and Don Tsuchiyama. © Ann Summa

It's not only the subscription fee that keeps Flynn's standards high, says Tsuchiyama. It's also the software she uses on her IBM PC — a custom BBS program designed by Marc "The Martian" Schoenberg (who has his BBS system in Mar Vista, "MMMMMM #1," 213-390-3239).

"For the people who are not into programming — which is rapidly becoming the bulk of computer owners — the (Schoenberg-designed) Martian BBS is very easy to use," notes Tsuchiyama. "The people that run (BBS systems with Schoenberg's software) tend to have a better class of user. Martian Software boards sysops avoid getting into the seamier side of BBSing. Ever since she started, Lynzie has enforced a rule of no obscene public messages."

"I don't even have to enforce it," adds Flynn. "People don't violate it. I rarely even get a complaint from someone who gets unsolicited obscene private mail. That's a lot different from the other boards I've seen — especially Apple boards which seem literally based on obscene mail."

The difference in personality of BBS systems is partially an attribute of the equipment. One can run a BBS on a Commodore for a couple of hundred dollars, which is easily within the range of younger users. An IBM system obviously requires a much greater financial commitment.

With an IBM PC, two 360 floppy drives, a ten megabyte hard disc, and a Hayes 1200 baud Smartmodem, Lynzie Flynn would seem to have made her commitment. However, she says she's not satisfied and speculates on the attractions of having a multi-user capability (allowing for conference calls).

Attractive as it sounds, says Marc Schoenberg, there are some obvious problems involved with multi-user capability. "The biggest problem right now is that there's no stable software on the market," he notes. "There are a few programs (such as Unix, MailPac, and Multi Link) but the thing is that once you go to multi-user, you have to give control of the computer to the phone line. I refuse to do that. With (Martian) software, the computer sees the phone as just another disk file. If anything goes wrong, control doesn't go out. It just say I/O error and stops. I want to keep that for security reasons in case someone tries to break in."

In the two and a half years that his board has been going, Schoenberg says that he's received over 92,000 calls. And although he's gotten his share of crank calls after Christmas (when all the kids get their modems), by and large, Schoenberg says, he's been lucky.

"I've only had to delete about ten people for being jerks," he says. "Mostly they stay away from my board. Mostly it's people between 20 and 40 who just want to chat. There's not much fighting except sometimes on the X-rated board. Someone will complain about gays and someone else will defend them and that gets going until I go in there and wipe everything off. That's not what the board is there for."

Through the sale of his BBS programs, Schoenberg has come in contact with a variety of would-be sysops. And like the users, there is no "typical" personality type.

"I've had everything from a 13-year-old to middle-aged people," he says. "All different ages, all different walks of life, all different levels of computer skills. The only common factor is the desire to run a board."

Norman Strassner has more than just a desire to run a board. "I want to be a mini-CompuServe," says the sysop for one of Hollywood's newest BBS's, "Videoman" (213-666-8588). Although his two-and-a-half megabyte sysem (which uses a CompuPro 8/16 with dual 8 inch floppies) is barely a few months old, Norm Strassner's board already has a healthy list of 156 users.

Marc Schoenberg. Photo: © Ann Summa

"I feel my board has a hook that other boards don't — a reason of existence," he says. "My reason is to help the entertainment industry. An awful lot of BBS's are out there just for the exchange of programs or to play games. There aren't too many that specialize — which is what I'm trying to do."

The Videoman board does focus on one particular segment of the

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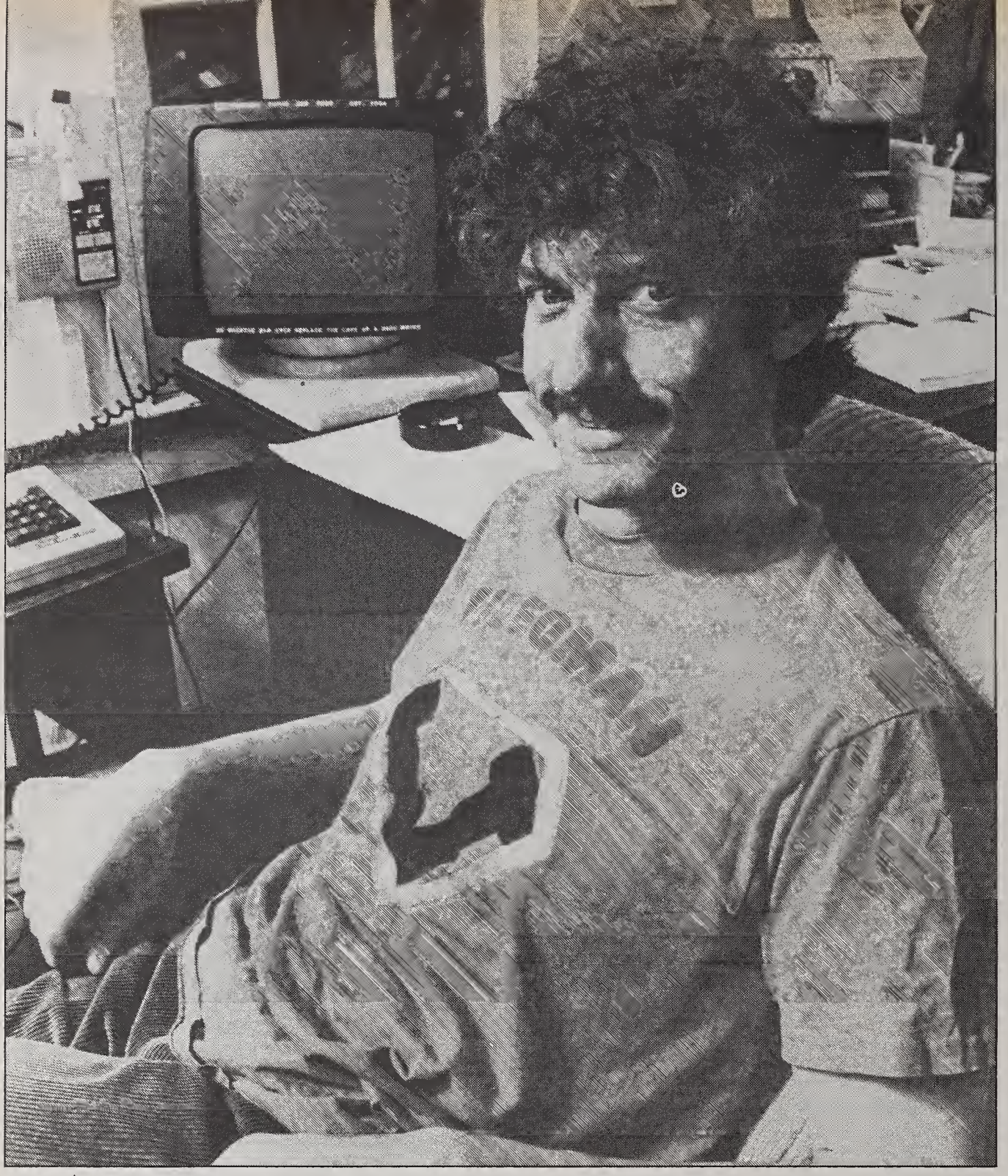

"Video Man" Norm Strassner. © Ann Summa

computer user community — those involved with the entertainment world: writers, producers, editors, agents, directors, etc. Strassner himself has a background in TV production, direction and writing (*Real People*, *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, among others).

"Being that I work in television all day, I don't want to come home and watch tv," he says. "This is a nice release for me. I used to spend much more time on other BBS systems until my wife saw the phone bills. Before I went on-line I used to call other boards to get public domain programs — and there are hundreds of thousands of dollars of public domain programs available. It's wonderful! And now I can sit back and people upload them to me."

Strassner is a great believer in public domain software — he's even written some of it himself. However, he notes that there can be danger in accepting a program for upload and not just for legal reasons.

"There is this upload that has been given out called *Ver. dir*," he says grimly. "What it is is a worm program and it can wipe out all the disk directories as well as boot tracks. When it's finished it will leave you with a message like 'Ha ha. I screwed up your system.' Or

Such destructive programs are few and far between, he notes. And despite the potential for danger, he shies away from the ideas of changing to a closed system.

"I'm an old ham radio operator," he says. "I do believe that the airwaves and communication in general do belong to the people and should be kept as free as possible. Some people have likened the [current popularity of] BBS systems to the CB radio craze, but I don't see it like that. There's a proliferation of systems now but eventually that will flatten out and then you'll see big changes. I think in the back of everyone's mind there is the belief that someday we'll become a BRS or a Source."

Strassner considers sysops to be experimenters involved in "pure research — because we have no set goals." Most people can't say where their boards are headed because they're always changing.

Strassner says he does have one goal that won't change - to be a friendly BBS. "I'd like to be as nice and untechnical as possible," he says. "I'm still developing. It might be four or five years before I get it to where I want it. And who knows, in four or five years I might be illegal." □

BBSing

While no one knows for sure, there are estimated to be at least 2000 BBS's on-line in the U.S. Since the vast majority of boards are private ventures, the personality of each is unique. Fairly complete listings can be obtained from any number of 24-hour boards. A fairly detailed (although not current) list can be found on the Novation Modem Information BBS (818-881-6880). Also, by reading messages on BBS public boards, one can learn about new BBS systems which have not made it onto other listings.

Other sources of information regarding BBSing can be found in "The Computer Phone Book" by Mike Crane or "The Complete Handbook of Personal Computer Communications" by Alfred Glossbrenner. Various specialty magazines have also dedicated certain issues to relevant bulletin boards such as the February "Profiles" (for Kaypro) or the December, 1984 issue of "User's Guide" (for CP/M machines).

Finally, to locate boards which are particularly suited to specific needs, local users groups can be a valuable source of information — not just for new BBS numbers but also for detailed instructions on uploading, downloading, and general BBS protocol.

No matter where you find a number, however, it is important to realize that every BBS represents a great deal of time and effort on the part of the sysop. Foul language, obscene messages, and abuse of time limits are the reasons why more and more sysops are demanding membership fees. It doesn't hurt to be polite, and while you're at it, be sure to leave messages for the sysop. Feedback helps.

The following is just a sample of some California boards. To obtain a much more complete list, call up one and request more information on other BBS systems.

KAYFOG RBBS & RCP/M(Fog System 11)
(415) 285-2687; Free; special help for newcomers, Kaypro, Morrow, Osborne, and CP/M.

SIMMS 001: SILICON VALLEY INTERCHANGE
(408) 732-9190; $25 annual fee; 44 megabytes strong, this BBS features a variety of message boards & thousands of files.

NAPA VALLEY RBBS/RCP/M
(707) 257-6502; Interests in Atari, Apple, Osborne, dBase II.

THOUSAND OAKS TECHNICAL
(805) 493-1495; This massive 64 megabyte board has a mind-boggling number of downloadable programs. The board has no bulletin board feature and allows unlimited upload time. Download time is limited depending on upload exchange.

GRANADA ENGINEERING GROUP RCP/M
(818) 360-5053; Technical information, BBS lists, and help on CP/M assembly language program writing.

AWARE II
(213) 851-0780; Sports BBS with different discussion boards centered around USFL, baseball, etc.

JUNKYARD DATA
(213) 867-9541; Multi-interest board in Norwalk with everything from jokes and for sale items to reviews (movies & software), trivia questions, an adults only section, etc.

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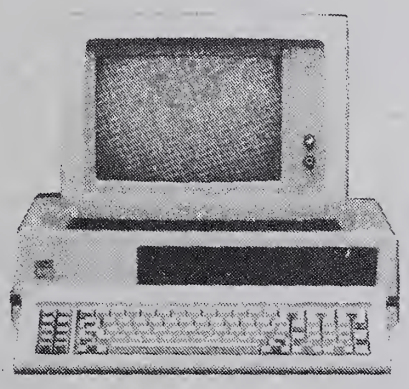

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Computers and Film

A visit with some of the featured speakers at the *"Computers Go to the Movies"* conference.

by Jeff Spurrier

Computers Go To The Movies

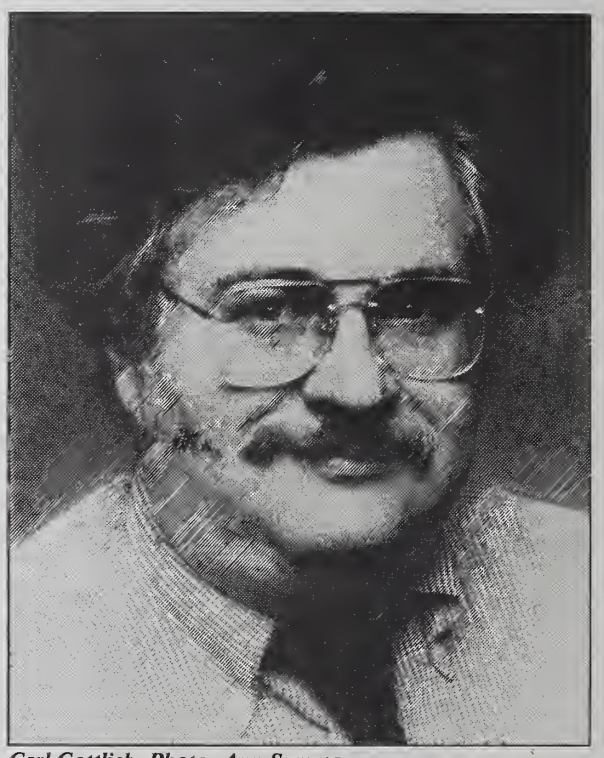
On March 29-31, the Film Institute of Northern California and the Mill Valley Film Festival will co-sponsor a seminar on the application of computers to the film and video industries, bringing together software designers, and manufacturers, along with film and video directors, producers and writers to share their views and experiences. Speakers and panelists will include Adam Osborne, Carl Gottlieb (screenwriter for *Jaws*), Steve Greenfield (co-creator of the popular screenwriting program *Scriptor*), Sidney Gains (senior vice-president of Lucasfilm), and well-known computer columnist John Dvorak.

Each day's agenda will highlight a different aspect of the industry: Friday will feature discussion and demonstration of budgeting, accounting and scheduling software for filmmaking applications; Saturday will concentrate on production and Sunday on wrap-up and post-production. There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and hands-on demonstration of software. The conference is particularly geared to independent film and video makers.

The conference will be held at Cinerent West/Stage A, 991 Tennessee St., San Francisco. Tickets are $50 per day ($60 after March 15) and are available by mail or at all BASS outlets. Call (415) 383-9053 for information, or write c/o the Mill Valley Film Festival, 80 Lomita, Suite 20, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

Carl Gottlieb, Screenwriter

"For a while at Hollywood parties, the writers were divided into two groups," says screenwriter Carl Gottlieb. "One group talking about deals and another new group talking about word processing."



Carl Gottlieb. Photo: Ann Summa

Gottlieb — whose credits include *Jaws*, *The Jerk*, and *Dr. Detroit*, among others — has been among the word processing enthusiasts for over two years, ever since he began working on his Compupro computer (hooked up to a Televideo 950 terminal).

"I was a total neophyte when I started," he says. "It was a little frightening, but I'm not naive about how things work. What I needed to do was write but I wound up playing a lot of *Adventure*. I couldn't stay away from it. I was amazed at how it worked, and playing it teaches you how computers work."

While his Compupro features 8" floppy drives — capable of handling 1.2 megabytes — Gottlieb found that wasn't enough for his purposes and eventually bought a 40 megabyte hard disc.

"When you're working with screenplays, the 1.2 megabytes can be used up in three drafts," he says. "I used *Wordstar*, the Random House Thesaurus, and The Word spell-checker, and that's four to five hundred bytes right there just for your operating system. The screenplay takes up two hundred more and if a backup is made all of a sudden you're out of room."

With over 15 years experience as a screenwriter, Gottlieb knows that it's a rare script that doesn't go through at least three or four drafts on its road to the screen.

"Stars change, production requirements change and you're constantly re-writing," he says. "The beauty of a word processing is that you can be updating constantly. A lot of screenplay writing involves cutting and pasting. And what may come out as one hard copy usually represents several revisions."

While word processors have removed much of the headache of script revisions, Gottlieb maintains that the computer has yet to revolutionize the film industry.

"Movies are one of the last of the hand-made art-forms," he says. "As sophisticated as the optics and Dolby Sound are, movies are still made by hand. They're very labor intensive. If you've never been on a set you see 80 guys standing around and it takes them 52 days to make a movie. Computers can't and probably never will make art — they can barely mimic the thinking of people."

More likely to change the way movies are made will be the widespread use of read-write laser discs, says Gottlieb.

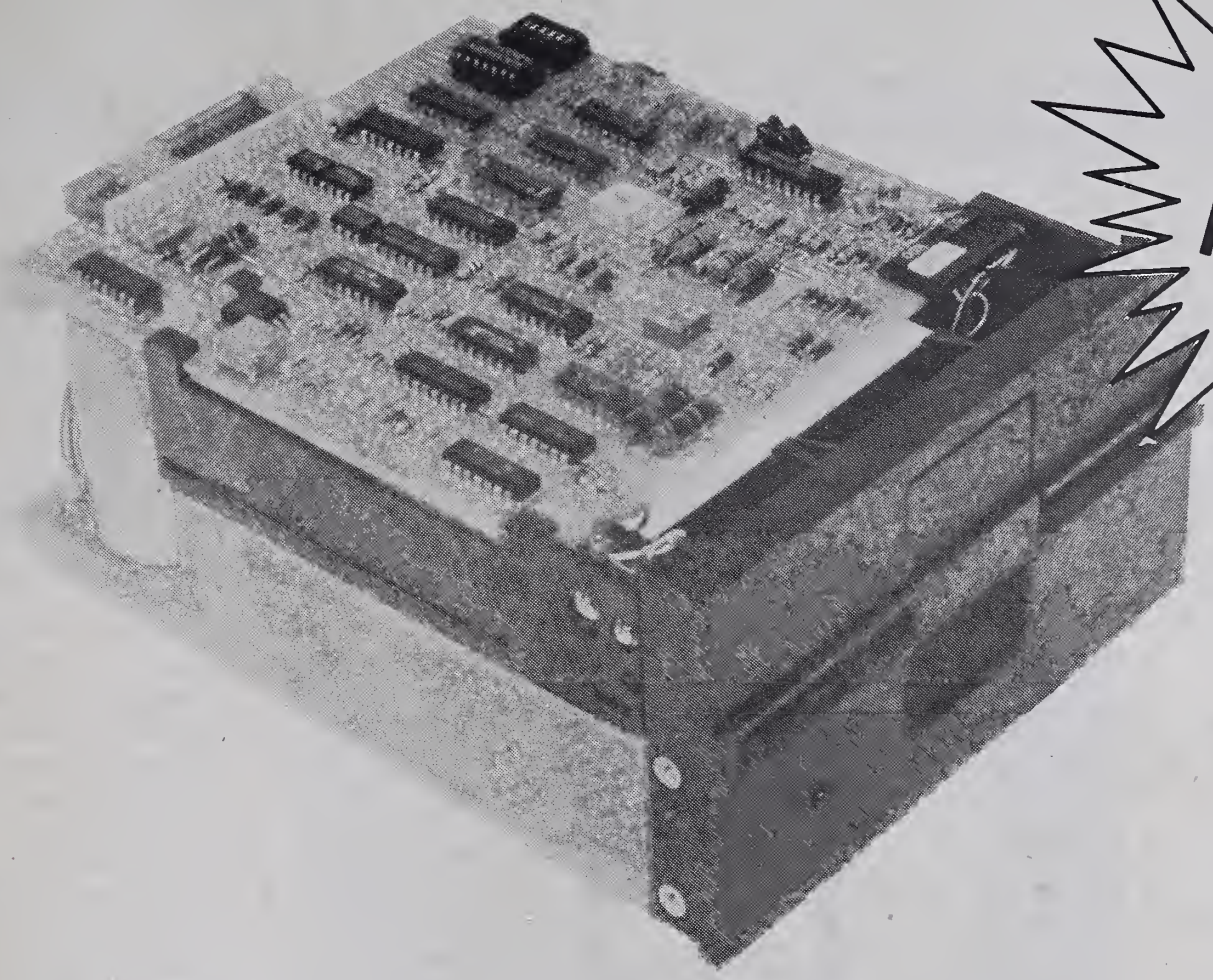
"Then you'll be able to put an entire motion picture — the outtakes and everything — onto a laser disc. And store everything digitally so you can remember the edits and assemble the thing any way you want."

Still, thanks to the development of entertainment industry oriented software such as *Scriptor* (see accompanying story) and *The Production Toolkit* (a production manager program that includes the ability to break down a script, set up a budget, build a production board, and generate a callsheet and shooting schedule), computers are having an impact in the making of movies. As yet, however, Gottlieb says there's no substitute for human experience.

"There are all these production problems," he notes. "Where do you park the trucks? Do you do the scene with the stuntmen in the morning or the afternoon? Does the star work straight through? Is it a long haul to the next location? Do you have the star for six days or three months?"

No computer can yet make those types of decisions. And in comparison, the workhorse word processor used for screenwriting is just "an incredibly strong and stupid typewriter." Of course they do have their drawbacks.

Says Gottlieb: "The word processor never says "Say, I like this. How does it end?' "



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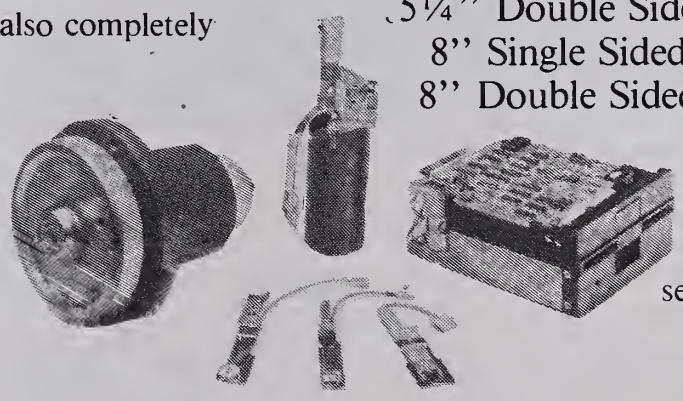

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Chris Huntley and Steve Greenfield
creators of *Scriptor*

"For such a small program with such a limited clientele, you'd think that it would be very obscure," says Steve Greenfield, the creator of *Scriptor*.

In reality, *Scriptor*, a unique text formatter designed for screenplay writers, has attracted the attention of an unusual assortment of publications, from *Writer's Digest* and *Daily Variety* to more typical computer journals like *PC Magazine*. With a clientele list that includes names like Marlon Brando, Steven Spielberg and Paul Mazursky, it's not surprising that Greenfield and his company, Screenplay Systems, have made news.

It's not what *Scriptor* allows you to do that makes it popular so much as what it frees you from doing — dealing with the drudgery involved in re-writing a screenplay. And in Hollywood, it's axiomatic that "screenplays aren't written — they're re-written."

"With *Scriptor* a re-write is no longer a tedious time-consuming monster," says Chris Huntley, Greenfield's partner at Screenplay Systems. "You do the re-write and editing part and the computer takes care of everything else."

And when one is dealing with screenplays, "everything else" is more than just keeping the punctuation straight. An acceptable format for screenplays requires a set style that includes the numbering of scenes, different margins for dialogue and stage directions, "continued" markings at the top and bottom of pages, notation regarding omitted scenes, and page breakings that occur at intelligent locations.

It may not sound like much, but when one scene is changed at the start of a 120-page screenplay, the problems of making the remaining pages neat and "legal" become obvious.

"Rather than re-type everything, people used to just not change certain material," notes Greenfield. "Or they'd only re-write a certain part so that it would still fit and look neat. The format and craft part was infringing on the creative aspect. Now the technology of getting it on paper is almost negligent."

Chris Huntley and Stephen Greenfield. Photo: Ann Summa

Considering how specific *Scriptor* is, it's not surprising that the program was the product of two screenwriters, both graduates of U.S.C.'s film school. The program was written by Greenfield — partly out of personal necessity. With over a dozen years' experience in programming, he thought it would take only a few weeks to write *Scriptor*. Ten months later he was finished.

And with that much time invested, both Greenfield and Huntley (who wrote the documentation) are understandably nervous about pirating — especially in such a tight-knit world as the entertainment industry.

"You wouldn't want someone to rip off your script ideas or original writing and give them to another writer, would you?" reads the program's sign-on message. "This software was written by two screenwriters with the same creative labor and love as would go into any script or novel. Please don't do to us what you would kill someone for doing to you."

" 'We get calls from writers who tell us 'I loved your sign-on message,' " says Greenfield. "They say 'It really made me think about what I was doing and because of that I'm not going to rip you off.' "

At $295, *Scriptor* is not cheap but for those who need it, price is no object. As Greenfield says, the program is designed for professionals using scores of systems with a variety of software.

"*Scriptor* can work with lots of word processors," says Greenfield. "But we'd like it to work with the best. That 's why we push *Microsoft Word*. It does the text-entry part of screenwriting brilliantly, as opposed to programs that are bombs like *Multimate*, ones that are inappropriate like *Sammna Word III*, ones that are lackluster like *Wordstar 2000*, or ones that are antiquated like the original *Wordstar*."

Whatever one may say about *Scriptor*, the program is certainly not antiquated. The program has been out for just over two years and has sold 850 copies. And while it hasn't been nominated for an Academy Award yet, a *Scriptor*-formatted script has — *Beverly Hills Cop*. □

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By Ken Goehner

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Dataspeed has come out with two unique new products for the professional home and business investor. One, called the QuoTrek, is a pocket sized device that looks something like a large multi-function calculator with an antenna. It is the first mobile, cordless, rechargeable, computer-based quotation device ever. It can access information on over 7,000 stocks and commodities from the NYSE, AMEX, and NASDAQ, as well as three major commodities exchanges, all within *two seconds* of the most recent transaction. The QuoTrek features a forty character Liquid Crystal Display that shows the high, low, previous day's close, closing prices, and total volume information, as well as the current price. Additionally, QuoTrek's onboard memory can save and automatically update quotes on forty stocks and commodities.

This device lists for $399 including battery pack, charger, AC adapter, and leather carrying case, with a monthly base service price of $30, a $10 service fee per exchange, plus required exchange fees for the NYSE, AMEX, and NASDAQ. An additional charge is made for the commodity update service from the Chicago Board of Trade, Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and the Commodity Exchange Center. Each subscriber has an individual password programmed into the QuoTrek monitor which must be updated every month for continued services. This feature enables Dataspeed to effectively turn off the data access if the customer doesn't pay for the services.

While at first glance these charges may seem high, it should be pointed out that, unlike the Dow Jones service or the Source, it costs the same amount to use the QuoTrek service for one minute as it does to run it all day. What's more, if you're in a situation where you actually could profit from being in constant touch with the markets, or even merely aspire to track the inside traders and monitor market trends for, say, sales purposes, then the cost of these services is deductible as a cost of doing business, and the initial cost of the QuoTrek can be depreciated over a three to five year period.

Try doing that with a Walkman.

Dataspeed's second product is a device called a Modio. As the name implies, the Modio is something of a cross between a modem and a radio. It functions much the same way as the QuoTrek, only the Modio is designed as a telecommunications peripheral to augment a microcomputer, and has some more sophisticated abilities than its portable brethren. In addition to providing information on last sale, high and low, open, previous close, exchange, and total volume, the system is capable of continuously updating portfolios of up to 250 user selected stocks or commodities. It also provides the up/down tick, a news indicator, and an audible alarm that can be triggered by some user-preset value in any and all of the monitored categories, *e.g.* price and volume. Perhaps the most important aspects of the Modio is that it has a 64K memory buffer that allows it to act independent of the computer, so that the user can implement other programs while the Modio is monitoring the exchanges and still alert the user to significant market changes, and that the Modio's MarketWatch Real-Time Software package can be downloaded into RAM and so permit multi-tasking with application programs such at *Lotus 1-2-3, Symphony*, and *WordStar*.

The original Modio was designed for the IBM PC, XT, and AT and all the clones with a minimum of 192K. A new version for the Macintosh will be on the market this month. An Apple II series version will be available later. The limiting factor is only the amount of Random Access Memory space available in the computer — 128K will store only 150 quotations. What this will mean to Apple II+ (64K maximum) users is subject to question. The best bet is to consult your dealer or call Dataspeed direct ((800) 762-7538, or (415) 571-1800 local) when the Apple II version is released.

The Modio with accompanying software, antenna, cables, and manuals lists for $549.95. Subscription fees start at $60.00 a month for access to data from one stock or commodity exchange, and incremental $10.00 fees for each additional exchange. The initial

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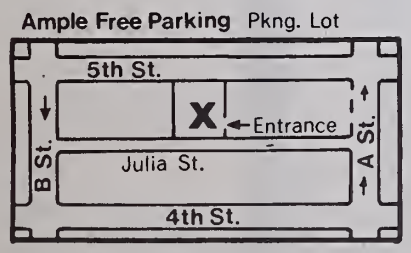

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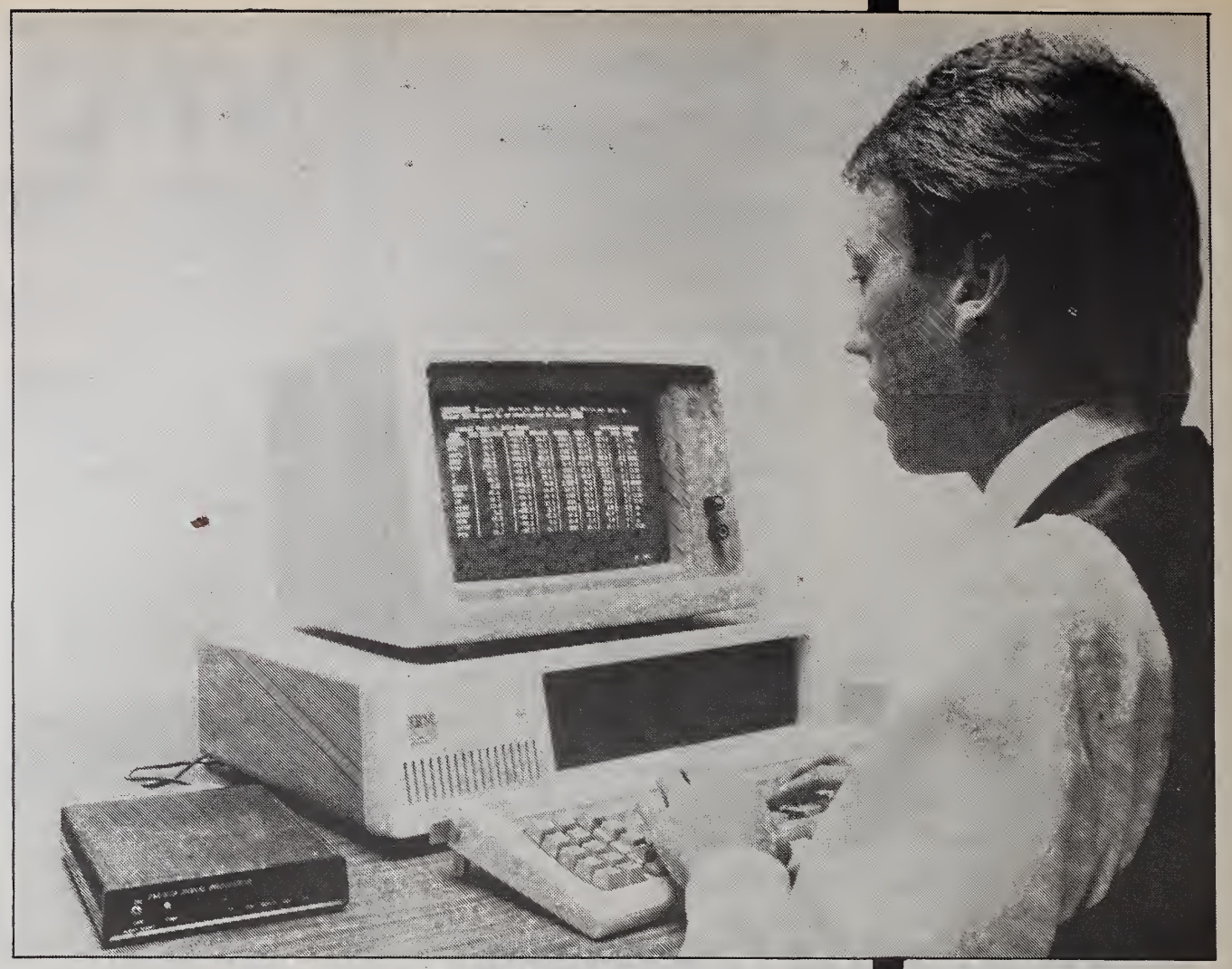

Modio brings instant stock quotes to your PC.

cost and service fees can be written off your taxes the same way they can be with the QuoTrek.

There is no magic behind the information gathering abilities of the QuoTrek and the Modio, though given their capabilities it would seem that someone along the line has been dabbling in the black arts. The secret behind the Dataspeed systems is their utilization of FM subcarrier frequencies to transmit compressed digitally encoded information from satellite to specific urban areas, a technique very similar to the way that Muzak stations push elevator music from sea to shining sea. The areas served now are New York; Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Washington D.C., Dallas, Houston, and Miami, with more cities to follow. The Modio and QuoTrek can receive this information within a 40 to 60 mile radius of the FM station, or at an unlimited distance anywhere in the continental United States using a moderately priced satellite earth station.

This is just the beginning of Dataspeed's move to conquer the airwaves and bring the benefits of satellite technology to the individual consumer. Some of the projects they hope to have off the drawing board and online soon include an electronic mail alert system which will audibly inform the user that a message has arrived into the user's network service, and an international financial exchange information service that will cover currency exchange rates and commodities futures, the international stock market, possibly even the latest going interest rates on Euro- and petrodollars. All conveyed to the subscriber twenty-four hours a day, at something just a tad under the speed of light. The only problems keeping Dataspeed from introducing these services now are legal and financial; the countries they have been approaching keep tight restrictions on their airwaves and frequency allocations, and until such time as the Modio catches on as an information tool there will not be enough of an installed user base large enough to support a global staellite network of investment information services. When there is, and that should come about soon, there will probably develop a whole new crop of the nouveau riche, as well as hundreds of prematurely grey economists. To compound the problems of our beleaguered group of economists, Dataspeed will soon be introducing a new Modio that will not only receive information, but will allow you to place buy and sell orders via your computer, a capability which may engender a whole new variety of discount brokerage.

The genius behind all of this is David Lockton, president of Dataspeed, a lawyer-turned-entrepreneur and a seasoned veteran of new company start-ups and new ideas. Lockton started his own legal practice in Indianapolis in 1965. His specialty was athletes, and by dint of circumstance and geography that meant a lot of race car drivers. Over time that kind of fast company brought him in contact with all sorts of interesting characters, including O.J. Simpson, Johnny Unitas, Evel Knievel, several of the Apollo astronauts and most importantly, Paul Newman. In 1977 he and Newman formed the Lola Gran Prix Company, an outfit dedicated to getting racetracks set up around the country. He was in the process of developing the Ontario Motor Speedway in Los Angeles when he got involved in Dataspeed, then a group of three engineers who were developing RF based timing and scoring devices. He became their sole customer, and in 1980 bought into the company. By 1981 they had decided to take the research and development done for the timing devices and devote it to radio broadcast computer information services. With Lockton's track record and the quality of the products and services, there can be little doubt of Dataspeed's ongoing success with revolutionary devices. □

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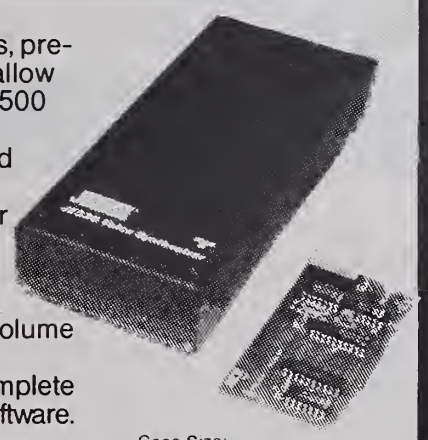

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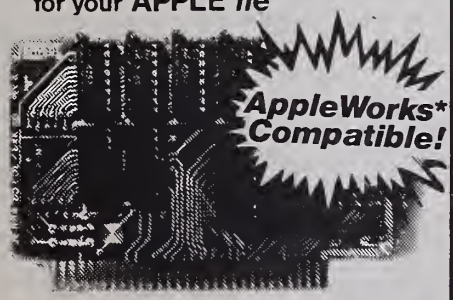

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REVIEWS

BUSINESS SOFTWARE

MICRO-TAX

Published by: Microcomputer Taxsystems Inc.
For: IBM

In the age of computers, I hope you're not still having your taxes done by a firm that does them by hand. It has been proven time and again that, with the help of a computer system in calculating large quantities of numbers, man cannot compete with the CP/U. If you are using a tax firm which employs computers, ask them what kind of software they are running. If they respond with *MICRO-TAX*, you should feel secure.

MICRO-TAX offers three versions of its "professional" tax package in the true spirit of the Olympics: Bronze, Silver and Gold, each designed to run on the PC and XT systems.

The Bronze version is designed for the non-professional user as a total tax preparation package. However, based on the version I put to the test, it seemed more suited to the user with a strong accounting background than the home user who is trying his hand at satisfying Uncle Sam at tax time.

The Silver and Gold versions are intended for use in the professional environment of the tax preparer. Our demo was the level II or Silver edition, along with the California State disks and forms. In reading through the enclosed information, I found that the state tax supplements are not included in the basic package, and corporate/partnership disks and forms are also available at an extra charge. The Silver and Gold versions are base priced at $995.00 and $1195.00, respectively.

Documentation of *MICRO-TAX* is contained in a massive, three-ring binder, plus an additional 116 pages of the California State instructions and a mass of sample forms. In general, the documentation reads well. It's written in a somewhat user friendly fashion, but does assume that the user is totally versed in tax accounting and procedure.

MICRO-TAX is a menu-driven format with many on-screen prompts to guide the user through the session. At the beginning of each session, the user specifies the tax forms and schedules required to prepare the client's return. From that point, the program logic interacts with the data entry with a sophisticated error handling routine to ensure proper entry and to eliminate needless screen prompts. For example, if a Social Security Number is missing a digit, the user is notified, or in the case of a single taxpayer, there will be no prompts for the spouse. Also, the prompts are expressed in IRS terms to minimize confusion to the professional preparer.

The heart of the program is its integrated data base. All forms and schedules are updated from any change within the form, thus minimizing duplication of data entry. When a new client is put on line and basic prompts answered about the tax preparation, a customized questionnaire is printed. This is to aid the client and practitioner in the preparation of data to input. The extensive data base, which interacts with the client's prior returns, updates and figures the current allowable depreciation on assets based upon the method of depreciation being used.

One of the finer points of *MICRO-TAX* is the ability of the system to send customized transmittal letters to the client. One of these is a letter of advisement to the client tabulating his total tax liability, complete with instructions on filing the completed forms. Another is a configuration to be sent to the client prior to the consultation, similar to the customized questionnaire for future years' tax preparation. The package is also able to link up with TAXNET, a telecommunications link to access system updates and user support (extra fee required). Annual updates are also available to licensed users, to advise of system enhancements and tax law changes as they apply to the use of *MICRO-TAX*. Another plus to the system configuration is that it allows "batch" printing to accommodate continuous input of data and printing at a more convenient time.

Currently available is the new *MICRO-TAX 1040 PLANNER*. From the literature provided with our demo, the Planner is a tool for the professional tax strategy planner. The basic system (Silver and Gold versions only) interfaces with the Planner to project tax effects for clients five years into the future with as many as five different strategy alternatives.

All of this power at a very reasonable price, for the institutional user, and a hardware requirement of only 128K RAM, two drives and a printer. For the professional tax preparer, this system demonstrates some huge advantages over custom-written software.

— Doug Pencille

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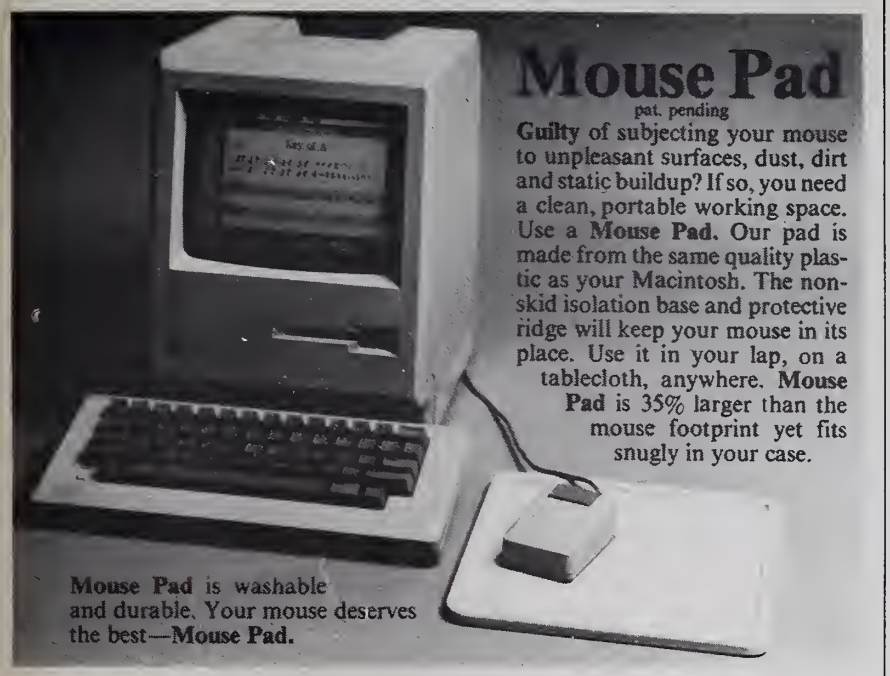

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BUSINESS SOFTWARE

TAXPAYER'S SURVIVAL PROGRAM,
By: CARDCO, Inc.
For: Commodore-64 Only

As that dreaded time of the year draws near, people's thoughts turn to taxes, or "How to Pay the Least Possible and Still Be Legal, Without Really Trying." The packages reviewed here all calculated the same tax amount for the same benchmark income and deductions (so you need have no worries about arithmetic), but have three differing approaches to the problems and processes of entering your tax data.

They also have different approaches to documentation. *Swiftax* and *Tax Advantage* both have computer-type manuals that are intended for first-time computer users. They are reasonably well-written and understandable, and have the added nicety of bindings that allow them to lie flat during use. *Swiftax*, with 76 pages, tries to use a minimum of "computerese" and tax jargon in its presentation. *Tax Advantage* presents pictures of typical screen formats in its 85 page manual, and includes a running demo program on the reverse side of the disk, a good feature. *Taxpayer's Survival Program*, on the other hand, presents only a breezy 8 page folder on the computer aspects of the program, but they throw in the *complete* 268-page H&R Block Tax Handbook, thereby winning the documentation page-count war hands down.

To start using *Swiftax*, you must initialize a data disk and create your taxpayer file, using a secret password (which makes you feel very secure until you list the data disk directory and find your password as part of the filename!) Oh, well, it does help to avoid confusion if you do more than one tax return on a single disk.

Swiftax will complete and print the usual, frequently used forms and schedules. Some miscellaneous forms and schedules are also omitted, but the package includes a loan amortization program for calculating interest payments, just in case your lender gave you the business by not giving you the records.

Your data disk is used throughout the program, alternately with Sides 1 and 2 of the Program disk. This is not an especially speedy process. Another disadvantage is you *must* do all of the forms in order and not skip around or the routines will not work. Data entry is easy once you get the hang of it. Just use normal computer entry format to answer the questions the program asks, and it will put everything in the right places. These dialogues may prompt you to include something you may have missed or forgotten, which I consider a major plus of this technique.

Swiftax will print to paper or screen on command. If you have pre-positioned a tax form in your printer (difficult!) it will fill in the blanks in IRS format. Otherwise you get columns of unidentified numbers on blank paper, which doesn't do you very much good. Screens include a facsimile of the tax form lines and are much more useful for checking before the final printout. Since no draft print capability is included, a screen-print utility, if you have one, would be useful here.

Tax Advantage takes a different approach, and is arranged in the same manner as the Form 1040. It should appeal to the more organized personality, since to use it you merely enter the data required by the 1040 and the program does the rest. You can itemize almost any line if you want to, simply by entering an "I" instead of a figure, and *Tax Advantage* will give you an itemization screen for that line. Totals are automatically carried back to the main form and override any numbers already entered there. Data entries are a little more complicated than with the other two programs, requiring a pointer movement and special entry symbol for each. This can be exasperating, but assures that it is done right, and it permits a handy adding machine function during entry, which can be helpful.

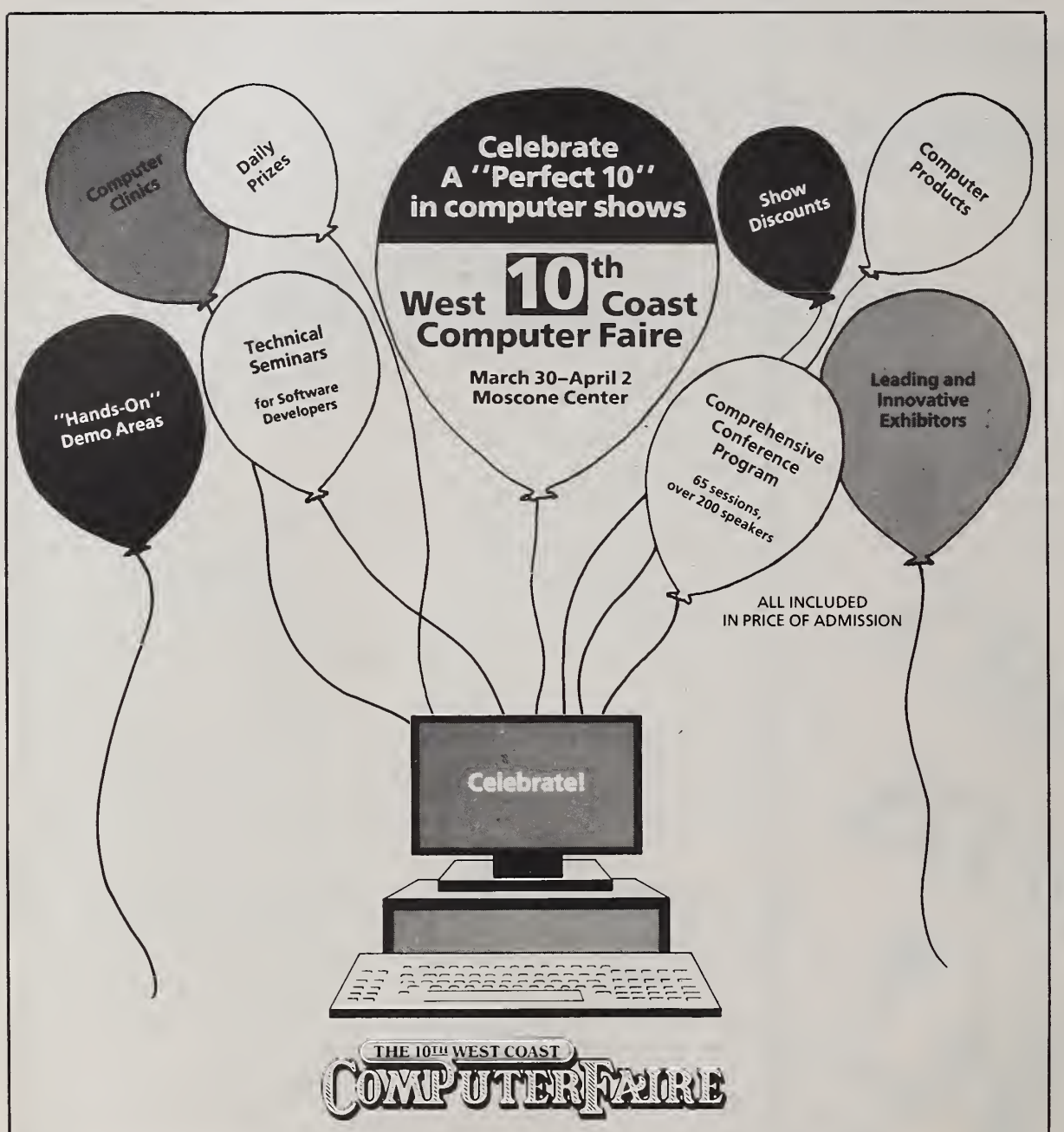
All screened forms and schedules have the form name on the top line, followed by line numbers and data corresponding to the IRS form. There is a function menu at the bottom of each screen, listing the functions you can perform at any given point in the program. The valuable command here is "T for tax," which gives your instant tax situation any time it is pressed. "H for help" is another valuable key if you are anything like me when you are doing your taxes.

You can print draft or IRS formats of all the forms and itemizations. A careful perusal of Arrays' interpretation of the IRS regulations for signed forms, such as the 1040, and substitute computer-generated forms and schedules leads one to believe that there is little utility in trying to use your computer to print and fill in many of the forms, and that hand transcribing from the draft formats is best. Maybe so. It's your choice.

Taxpayer's Survival Program was the quickest and most fun to use — if anything having to do with income taxes could be called "fun." It executes using the same approach as its manual and is menu-driven, so I just loaded the program disk and answered the questions as they came up. You can go to almost any form or schedule from any other by hitting the key for the new page. To find out how each page is keyed, use the f1 key to go to the menu. Use the "U for Update" key to see what your current refund or balance is at any stage of preparation (this is a nice feature), or just before you start to use information from the screen. Updates are automatic whenever you print or save.

Data entry can be either as a summary total on your Form 1040 format page or itemized from another schedule. Totals transfer over automatically. Once you've itemized you must make any future changes on that schedule, since the 1040 won't accept any more summaries on that line. This is indicated by a color change on the screen.

You can print in either draft or IRS forms format to your printer. Drafts include the tax form line data as well as your tax numbers. When using the forms



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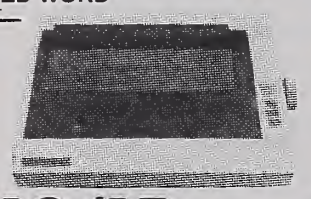

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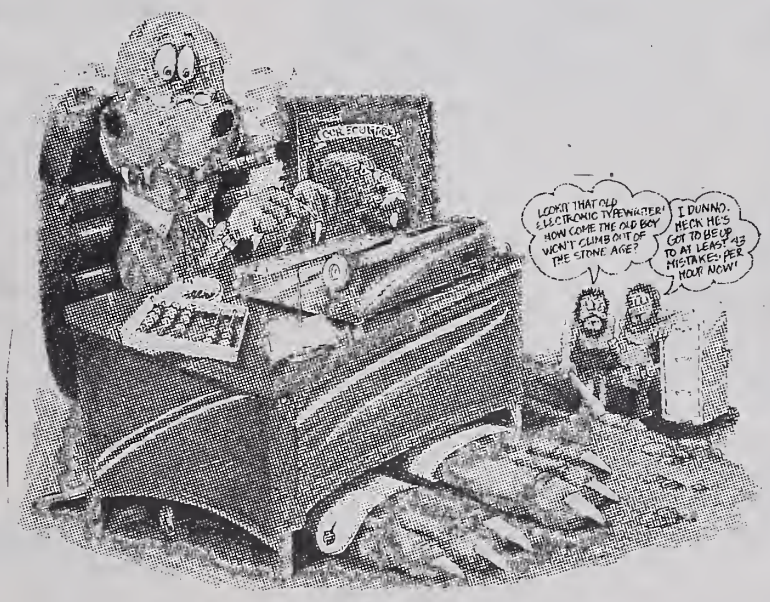
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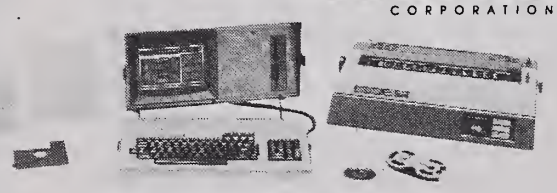

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option, a single "*" is printed one line above the first character to be printed, as an alignment aid when actual tax forms are used, which is a big help.

A warning: all three of these programs have frequent and long "garbage collection" periods, especially if you are making a lot of corrections. Don't panic. The box unlocks in 10 to 70 seconds, so wait for it and don't try things that might cause you to lose data.

Unless you're a tax preparation professional, you can't go too far wrong in selecting any of these packages that appeal to you for any of the reasons I've given. All offer support in either program use or tax form preparation (not both at the same time), and may have supplemental programs for selected State Tax preparation by the time this article is published. They allow limited "what ifs" on forms to file, alternative computations, etc. Just remember that the taxes you pay depend on the data you input into the program, and there's no magical algorithm built in that will automatically increase your refund. Those are among my own personal programming suggestions for next year's versions.

— Ed Shurtleff

YOUR PERSONAL NET WORTH

Developed by: ISA Software, Inc.
Published by: Scarborough Systems, Inc.
For: Apple II Series w/64K RAM, Commodore 64 w/64K RAM, Atari w/48K RAM

Your Personal Net Worth is a personal or home accounting program which will allow you to establish a budget, monitor your household income and expenses, record stock transactions, and organize data for your tax returns more easily. The program comes with two disks: a program disk and a data disk with the Income, Expense, Asset, and Liability accounts set up for you. There are 170 accounts for these categories, plus another 250 credit card accounts. The program allows you to set up a budget column for each category and, as the name implies, will give you a Statement of Net Worth (the dreaded Balance Sheet). Of course, its accuracy is in direct relation to the accuracy and completeness of your data and the time you spend on the program. Think about this carefully. This is one case where you have to do more work than the computer.

Documentation is a 124 page manual, laid out in tutorial format. It was easy to read, not very easy to understand, easy to follow as a tutorial, and not too easy to find out what went wrong when you try it on your own.

The program disk is copy-protected and no back-up is included. The disk will be replaced free by the dealer or Scarborough Systems for 30 days, after which replacement costs $5.00 from Scarborough Systems. Nothing is mentioned about a back-up disk. Make your own judgment here.

I booted up on my Apple IIe and immediately noticed a problem: when booted, the program plays a little tune, and almost every keystroke is answered by a tone. The manual says that CTRL G will turn the sound off; however, I wore mine out and that dastardly beep was still there. Aarrgh!

The program seemed to take forever to load (probably due to all the menus and account files) but once in memory it ran quickly. Entry is totally menu-driven and straightforward. There is ample time to back out if you make an error. You may add, change, or delete any data until you post to a journal. At that point a reversing entry is needed. A very nice feature is a default on the options. If the default option is correct, hit RETURN. Otherwise, change the entry and hit RETURN. ESCAPE returns you to the previous screen and erases any entries made on the current screen.

I found several inconsistencies between my shoebox method and *Your Personal Net Worth*. My house payment includes an impound account for property taxes and insurance. The loan payment account in *Your Personal Net Worth* allows only principal and interest. You must add the impounds to interest, which causes the balance in this account to be inaccurate, or create two new accounts for impounds, which is a lot of work and greatly increases the chance of error. Another example: a diamond ring is purchased for $1200. The purchase must be treated as a transfer between assets (cash and jewelry) in this case. I usually don't use cash to buy diamond rings, and I would like to record the sales tax, which a transfer will not allow. Expense accounts, on the other hand, have a column for sales tax; however, I cannot expense diamond rings. The idea seems to be to transfer everything you don't want expensed to cash. Even credit card purchases must be expenses. To properly record this transaction requires more manipulation than I care to do.

Additionally, when I went to exit the program, I returned to the main menu and chose the Exit option, whereupon the program rebooted itself. I couldn't get out and I also couldn't shut the music off. Double Aaarrgh!

I have always felt that there are three areas best left to manual entry. These are address/telephone lists, recipe files, and personal checkbook/accounting functions. I still feel that way.

In sum, I cannot condemn the program just because it didn't work for me. Each person has different needs. If the program will do what you need, buy it. I'll keep my shoebox.

— Larry Clark

CUSTOM FILE: A RELATIONAL DATA BASE

Published by: Custom Data
For: IBM and compatibles with 320k floppy drive and 256k installed memory

There's a new relational data base system worth serious consideration by businesses looking at IBM PC or PC compatible software. *Custom File* uses either IBM or Microsoft Basic interfacing as both a procedural and custom programming language, enabling the user to access multiple files, "update" them, and do complicated formula calculations, while using custom-made menus and generating custom reports.

The result, for the user, is a system which effectively turns a PC into a much larger system, with data entry automatically updating files and generating the appropriate reports. All data and program files reside in RAM, allowing rapid and convenient access, but requiring lots of memory: 512K to 640K if all help screens are enabled and your data base is of consequence. Designed for the small to medium sized business, CUSTOM FILE is excellent at managing customer/client data, but, with the addition of Basic programs, can also interface between files, allowing a single data entry to update all specified files.

Using a "file cabinet" theme (we found the new terminology difficult), files and forms with like applications are stored in the same cabinet. Basic programs designed for you enable these files to directly relate like fields, update them, do the calculations required, and generate the appropriate updated reports. In addition, data entry screens are pre-defined, as are forms and reports, allowing a user to deal directly with those records needing attention, and bypassing all others.

One of the major selling points for this software is the "Search" function. "Search" allows the user/programmer to define relationality criteria for each defined field, either pre-determined or as required, locating those records which meet the criteria. "Sort" will then define these records in ascending or descending order. For example, a client list could be "searched" by state, then city, then zip, and then alphabetized, without disturbing the original file. Finally, a report can be generated to the on-line printer or to the screen. If additional fields are required, such as account balance, Basic programming interface would enable the system to go to the appropriate file and get those fields, outputting them to the correct location on the report.

Custom File also has a global function, which will allow a single data entry to update either all records or only those which meet the specified search criteria, which can be pre-determined or defined as required. The ability to look through and select records, and then report the selections, should be able to meet the needs of most managers.

Custom File is, in short, a PC system that will handle traditional data base management, but also order entry, invoicing, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and inventory management functions, all connected with primary key data and using Basic to connect the applications. Unlike pre-packaged, mass marketed products, *Custom File* is designed to be tailored to your business needs, with forms, reports, menus, and data entry screens that meet YOUR specific requirements.

A word of caution: Unlike *Lotus 1-2-3*, *Symphony*, etc., *Custom File* is a system. It will require a Basic language pro to fully integrate these files and applications in the most effective manner. *CF* is not an easy package at first, but once installed can substitute (in many cases) for a traditional large computer.

The Reference Manual is thorough and well-written, and organized in a logical, easy-to-follow manner. We found, however, the Tutorial is much more difficult to follow and understand. (A new release of these manuals was scheduled and may be out by presstime.) Often, the information needed to follow the Tutorial disk is amidst reference-type information which could be eliminated or consigned to the Reference Manual. Another frustration, we found, was the Tutorial disk itself. Apparently designed with the programmer in mind, it was confusing to the potential user, not clearly defining the steps taken to locate a record, update it, interface with required files, and generate the appropriate report. The creation of forms, screens, files, and cabinets is clearly covered, but somehow the potential of the system as a whole is not clearly defined.

A difficulty we experienced was the multiple F-key functions. Program options are defined with F-keys; menu options are defined with F-keys, or alternate, shift, or control F-keys, in an ever-changing kaleidoscope. We did find, however, that in time we could remember, or use the help screens (also called with F-keys). Still, thirty or forty F-key functions seem like too many for efficient programming.

What about the bottom line — the price? At $150.00, this software can't be beat. Keeping in mind the initial set-up cost for your Basic programming needs, you may well decide that *Custom File* will handle your data management requirements, all from your desk-top PC.

— Diana Woodworth and Noboru Nazuka

DISPLAYWRITE 2

Published by: IBM
For: IBM PC
Cost: $250-$300

Now that computer word processing software is so abundant, we sometimes forget that many word processing software packages are developed exclusively for "dedicated" word processors. Because the sole function of dedicated word processors is to process words, these software systems are often very sophisticated. I've worked with, or evaluated, many dedicated word processors, and the IBM *Displaywriter Textpack VI* is my personal favorite. Because of the close match between *Textpack IV* (the system I

currently use at work) and *DisplayWrite 2*, it seemed logical to buy *DisplayWrite 2* for my IBM PC.

DisplayWrite 2 exhibits many features of *Textpack IV*, one being the three-line status display at the top of the screen. This display provides useful information regarding margins, tabs, line and page numbers, document status, cursor position (echoed on the margins and tabs line), and code descriptions. There is no guesswork about which mode you are in or where you are in the document.

Another nice feature is the four-function math capability. The COLUMN ADD and ROW ADD operations are especially nice, as is the ability to use constants and to easily derive averages. And the math defaults are easy to personalize for accounting or unformatted math applications.

Function and control key operations are simple to master for fast and efficient word processing. Cursor positioning is extremely quick once the user becomes familiar with the special keys such as HOME, END, BOUNDARY LEFT and BOUNDARY RIGHT, GO TO, and FIND.

Some operations that are especially simple to use are CENTER, WORD UNDERLINE, SUBSCRIPT and SUPERSCRIPT (nice for footnotes and equations), CODE DISPLAY (useful when working with variables), INDENT (different from TAB), and DELETE. The INSERT and OVERWRITE modes are entered via a toggle key, and the DELETE key requires only one keystroke for each character deletion, or two keystrokes for each code deletion.

The LAYOUT operation for text and numeric column creation and editing is a true joy. Columnar text (magazine-style format) is amazingly simple to create and edit, and the ALIGNED PARAGRAPHS feature is quite nice. As for editing numeric columns, the user can delete, add, or modify individual columns with a few keystrokes. This is a powerful feature.

So is SEARCH/REPLACE. With this operation, the user has the option of prompted or automatic mode, word or exact character search, and can, on a single pass, select up to three strings for modification.

Format changes are a breeze and can be performed anywhere within the document. Program defaults for features such as PAGINATION, SPELL, HEADERS and FOOTERS (including AUTOMATIC PAGE NUMBERING), KEYBOARD EXTENSIONS, as well as margins, tabs, and line spacing, are easily changed to suit the user's preferences, eliminating the need to format individual documents. The KEYBOARD EXTENSIONS select alternate keyboards, which may be a foreign language, equation symbols, and so on.

If you want to do some "serious" word processing, you can use the GET function to create repetitive documents, particularly useful for form letters. Or try the MERGE function and INCLUDE INSTRUCTION for document assembly, using variables and a document library. Or generate reports with a full complement of math operations, including SUMMARY MATH for totals, averages, highest and lowest values, and counts. These features are a little more complicated to learn than the "standard" word processing functions but, if you have the application, the capability is certainly there.

Some operations are slightly more cumbersome than I had hoped, but I've been spoiled on dedicated word processors. For instance, each of the COPY, MOVE, DELETE (for blocks of text), and OVERSTRIKE operations requires a minimum of four keystrokes (*Textpack IV* requires two), excluding cursor positioning. And the UNDERSCORE, BOLD, and text marker operations each require a minimum of six keystrokes. But *DisplayWrite 2* is menu-driven, making all of these operations a snap to use. The prompt line that appears at the bottom of the screen leads the user quickly through each step. And the ESC key provides a one- or two-keystroke exit from any point within any operation. This is nice.

My only real gripe about *DisplayWrite 2* is that, after setup, it demands two diskettes and some diskette swapping (even with a dual-disk drive) to boot the system. The dictionary for the SPELL function is on a third diskette (yep! three diskettes) which requires more diskette swapping each time you spell check a document. This is where a fixed disk becomes a blessing.

The SPELL function, probably one of the most important features in word processing, is simple and quick to use. It has several menu options, such as prompted or automatic mode, and you can develop a supplemental dictionary of words not commonly found in the English language. The SPELL function does not, however, provide suggested alternatives to misspelled words. I personally don't find this to be a drawback, but some users might.

As is usual for IBM, the *DisplayWrite 2* documentation is excellent. When the user consults the *Procedures Guide*, he or she will find it complete, accurate, and easy to understand. The documentation is presented in two hard-cover volumes with handsome slipcovers. But don't panic! Only one book, the *Procedures Guide*, is necessary to become a proficient system user. Also, the documentation is printed on smaller-than-letter-sized paper and about 30% of the material is illustrated. So there really isn't that much reading involved with learning the system.

The bottom line is I would, without reservation, recommend this system to anyone, novice or experienced word processor. It is a powerful and sophisticated word processing system. The excellent documentation, pertinent prompts, and clear menu descriptions make this system simple to learn and easy to use.

— Karen M. Sullivan

10-BASE, REV. 1.0

Published by: Fox Research
For: MS DOS 2.0 with 192K main store

10-BASE is a real sleeper. It is not nearly as well known as it should be simply because the company spent more time developing good software than developing fancy advertising campaigns. The *10-BASE* package delivers, and does so in a beautifully packaged program.

The *10-BASE* material is smaller and more concise than that of other data base packages, and the language has fewer commands. The package is elegant in the mathematician's sense — the fewest number of the simplest possible tools necessary to complete the job.

10-BASE implements a good version of SOL, the language developed by IBM for relational systems, on a microcomputer. The SELECT statement is the guts of the language and all that you really need to know to obtain data. The basic form of the statement is SELECT (list of data items), FROM (list of files), WHERE (logical expression). For example, you might write "SELECT name, address, phone FROM my list WHERE area code = 213;" and fetch a list of people who live in area code 213 from a file named "my list." You can add some bells and whistles to this basic form, but that schema will do 80% of your work in a real database.

The features that make *10-BASE* a true relational system are:

(1) The files can have duplicate records. Many systems require that every record have at least one field which has a unique value. This value is the "a" key and it can be used to locate a record in the file.

The package does have B-tree indexes for the files which will make *10-BASE* run faster, but they are optional. The user never needs to know about indexes, as he never needs to reference them in his queries.

(2) The package allows the user to join a file to itself. A join operation takes two files and makes a new file from them. The records in the new file are defined by a relation between their fields. That is hard to say but easy to see. Imagine a file called "maillist" which has the name, street and zip of a mailing list, and a file called "zip code" which has city, state and zip in it. To make a new file for mailing labels, you would join "zipcode" and "maillist" together.

(3) The join operation can be done with any relation. Many databases require that the fields used for the join have to be equal (hence the name "equijoin" or "natural join"). In *10-BASE*, you can pretty much write what you want in the WHERE clause.

Going back to the mailing list example, imagine that the "zipcode" file contains the lowest and highest zip codes for a city and state. That could reduce the size of the file quite a bit, when you consider how many cities have multiple zip codes. To generate the label file, use the clause "WHERE (maillist.zip) = zipcode, lowzip) AND (maillist.zip(zipcode.highzip)."

(4) You can create, delete and modify files as you need them, while doing queries. Many packages will not allow you to do this while you are in query mode. Instead, you have to stop and go to another program which does the file management.

(5) Aggregation operations are done by the system and not by the user. That means if you want to find an average, a minimum, a maximum, a sum or some other simple statistic for a group of data items, you call a function and don't have to write a program to count, tally and compute.

10-BASE has a simple report writer which can format and generate reports with one level of subtotals. It also has a simple input screen generator, which can check the data as it goes by calling SELECT statements. The sort program runs several times faster than *dBase II* in some simple tests. The package also has a data format conversion utility which will make *10-BASE* files into DIF files or ASCII format files (double quoted strings, commas between fields, one record per line). Character strings can be matched with templates that use the "?" and "*" wildcards which everyone knows from CP/M and MS DOS.

The real hackers can embed *10-BASE* commands inside Lattice C programs. This is not for the timid, but it can be done. Queries can be saved and recalled. The heavy users can buy a network package, *10-NET*, from Fox Research, and run multi-user *10-BASE*.

The hardest part of the package for me was loading the diskettes and not making typing errors. The tutorial was clear, and the manual is well done. The diskettes are not protected, so you can move the package to any directory. You can modify *10-BASE* in *10-BASE* because much of it is defined in itself. Likewise, you can increase the number of buffers and open files.

Now that I've said all these nice things about *10-BASE*, what is wrong or missing? There is really only one thing wrong. The current release treats dates as character strings and not as a full data type. That means that you cannot do any math with dates. The 2.0 release will, and it will, reportedly, be out before the middle of 1985. Owners of Rev. 1.0 will be able to upgrade for a fee.

I do have a wish list. I would like to see more conversion formats; it would be nice to read in files from spreadsheets and other databases. I am sure that some people would want to have more subtotal levels and fancy things in the report generator. On the more far-out side, I would like to be able to call 'C' procedures inside *10-BASE*. This would let me do fancy statistical and string handling functions.

The final verdict on this package is that you should seek this one out and buy it. It has to be the best package for the money in microcomputer databases.

— Joe Celko

USER GROUP NOTES

The West Coast Commodore Association is much to be congratulated for a first-ever and highly successful Commodore Show in San Francisco on February 9-10. Exhibitors and visitors from around the US and Canada exchanged views and ideas on new products and applications for the Commodore; many user groups were on hand as well, and the crowds frequently reached gridlock proportions. One hopes that next year the Association holds the event in a bigger hall.

We (that is to say, Dennis Erokan and Miles Hurwitz from Publishing and me from Editorial, a.k.a. The MicroTimes Roving Speaker Squad) paid a visit to the February meeting of East Bay FOG (First Osborne Group). After some brief remarks about our history and where MicroTimes fits into the computer scene, some lively discussion took place between MTers and FOGers on various topics, including the relative merits of various software programs, the general reluctance of software manufacturers to take Osbornes and other CP/M machines seriously, and the generally fierce loyalty of the members (many of whom, it turns out, own several computers and still love their Osbornes) to their computer of choice. An excellent time was had by all.

If *your* user group finds itself in need of speakers at its meeting, the aforementioned MicroTimes Roving Speaker Squad (or some variation thereon) will be happy to drop by with witty anecdotes and free magazines galore, at least in the SF Bay Area. (Maybe something can be arranged for Southern California too, if the need arises). All this is, of course, absolutely free of charge, and part of our ongoing campaign to get your input in our magazine.

Some user groups, especially fledgling ones, might be interested in the existence of the Public Domain Exchange in San Jose. In addition to marketing popular PD software at *extremely* reasonable prices, they publish several guides to public domain software for different machines. For more information, contact Judy Rosenthal at the Public Domain Exchange, 673 Hermitage Lane, San Jose, CA 95134. The phone number is (408) 942-0309.

Catherine Curtis of San Francisco is in the process of forming a new user group for the Sanyo line of computers. If you're interested, contact her for more info: 58 Clayton St. #4, San Francisco, or call (415) 668-0913 after 6:00 pm on weekdays.

Larry Welling of KAYFUN, the Peninsula Kaypro Users Group, wishes to inform the world at large that the group's meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm, in the ground-floor social room at 222 Laurel St., San Carlos. The group charges a membership fee of $12.00 per year, in return for which you get a bi-monthly newsletter, access to a public-domain software library, and a library of computer publications. Every third meeting is a Free Forum night devoted to individual help. For further information contact Larry at (415) 593-9981.

Emily Ott of the Silicon Valley Cromemco Users reminds us that the group's next meetings will be held on March 26 and April 23 at 7:30 pm, at MCM Enterprises, 215 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. She also points out that whereas they used to hold their meetings on the second Tuesday of the month, they have now switched to the fourth Tuesday. Call her for information, (415) 854-5818.

Darrell Bross of San Francisco is forming a group for users of databases. Tentatively titled BASES, the group will function much like a hardware-oriented group, with public domain databases, a monthly newsletter and "an educational program designed to help the home computerist explore the untapped power of a database approach." If this sounds like a good idea to you, give Darrell a call at (415) 586-5788, or write him at 254 Winding Way, San Francisco, CA 94112.

And for you CP/M users out there, Ed Svoboda Jr. of Cupertino announces a BBS just for you. He describes his system: "New releases, communications, and utilities for CP/M based computers are available on a nonprofit public-domain, 24-hour remote CP/M system. The SiMMS (Silicon Multiple Message System) Network Headquarters runs on a CompuPro 816 with 40 megabyte hard-disk drive. The modem number is (408) 732-9190. To register, send a six-digit password and $25 to SiMMS Headquarters, Silicon Valley Interchange RCP/M Registration, P.O. Box 532, Cupertino, CA 95015."

Well, once again, that's all, folks. Please continue to send me your listings, meeting dates, notices of special events, and anything else you want publicized for your group, and I'll get the word out. Southern Californians, this means you, too. Address correspondence to MicroTimes User Group Notes, 5951 Canning St., Oakland, CA 94609, Attn. Mary Eisenhart.

USER GROUP LISTINGS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ASSOCIATIONS

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility

This is a chapter of a nation-wide group dedicated to computer morality. Meetings take place the second Tuesday of every month. Interested persons should call 633-0922 for info.

The North Orange County Computer Club

This group is the largest and perhaps the oldest in the county. It is affiliated with a large number of special interest groups and offers something for just about every user. General meetings are usually the first Sunday of every month in the Hashinger Auditorium, Chapman College, Orange. For info, call (714) 998-8080.

The South Orange County Computer Club

A general computer club that meets the first Tuesday of every month at 3545 Harbor Blvd., Cost Mesa. Meetings begin at 7:00 P.M.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Gamenet

Bulletin Board System. BBS is devoted 100% to gaming subjects. 24 hours, 20 boards, 10 D&D/RPG boards, Alkahest, professional book reviews. Unending Story, Adventurers' Training Ground, Game Hint, etc. Sysop: L.J. Phone: (213) 541-8039.

Thousand Oaks Technical

(805) 493-1495. This massive 64 megabyte board has a mind-boggling number of downloadable programs. The board has no bulletin board feature and allows unlimited upload time. Download time is limited depending on upload exchange.

Granada Engineering Group RCP/M

(818) 360-5053. Technical information, BBS lists, and help on CP/M assembly language program writing.

Aware II

(213) 851-0780. Sports BBS with different discussion boards centered around USFL, baseball, etc.

Junkyard Data

(213) 867-9541. Multi-interest board in Norwalk with everything from jokes and for sale items to reviews (movies & software), trivia questions, an adults only section, etc.

Marina Matchup

(213) 397-6300. This Mar Vista-based dating board operates with Martian software.

USER GROUPS

APPLE

The Orange Apple Group

All Apple owners are invited. Members are knowledgeable on many usages of all types of Apple machines. Meetings are on the first Saturday of every month from 9:00 to 12:00 a.m. For info, call (714) 897-8943.

South Bay Apple III User Group

The Apple III is alive and well in Southern California. Come join us on the IIIrd Tuesday of each month. Product demos and discussions and more. Meeting address 1000 Victoria Avenue, Room #SC-E157, Carson, 7:30 pm, IIIrd Tuesday. Contact Gary, P.O. Box 432, Redondo Beach, CA 90277, (213) 316-7738.

Pasadena Apple Users Group (PAUG)

Meets at Century Federal Savings, 199 North Lake Avenue, Pasadena, CA (corner of Lake and Walnut). Enter from the parking lot side. Take the elevator to the basement. The bank unlocks the doors at about 7:15 pm and the meeting starts at 7:30. No dues, new members welcome.

AT&T

AT&T 6300

West LA: AT&T 6300 or 8086 compatible (desk pro) group forming. Contact Miles Hillis, (213) 472-3522, leave name and interest.

The Atari Computer Association of Orange County

The group meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at Golden West College, Math building, room 123, in Huntington Beach. Meeting starts at 1:00 pm for beginners and new members. More advanced meetings begin later. For info, call (714) 770-1683.

COMMODORE

Club 64

National user group. Monthly newsletter, BBS, group purchasing, public domain software, much more. Contact: Robert Johnson, (213) 925-4049.

San Diego Commodore Users Group

Meets third Tuesday, 7-10 pm, at VFW Bldg., 19th and Broadway, San Diego. Contact Jane Campbell, (619) 277-7214 (between 5 and 9 pm) for more information, or write: P.O. Box 86531, San Diego, CA 92138-6531.

San Fernando Valley Commodore Users Group

Meets second Wednesday of the month at Patrick Henry Junior High on Louise Ave. between Devonshire and San Jose in Granada Hills, near 118/405 freeway interchange. Contact Tom Lynch, 21208 Nashville, Chatsworth, CA 91311, (818) 709-4736.

San Luis Obispo Commodore Computer Club

1766 9th St., Los Osos, CA 93402. (805) 528-7475 BBS.

The Commodore Users Group - San Juan Capistrano

This group of C64 users meets the second Saturday of every month from 9:00 am till 12:00 at Great American Federal Savings and Loan, 32232 Camino Capo, San Juan Capistrano. For info call 496-5745.

The Commodore Technical Users Group

This club is for more advanced C64 users. They meet on the fourth Sunday of every month at Mercury Savings and Loan, 1095 Irvine Blvd., Tustin. Meetings start at 11:00 am.

EPSON

Cursor Club — Epson

402 W. Arrow Highway, Suite 6, San Dimas, CA 91773. (714) 559-8361, Bulletin Board: (714) 592-6316.

Foothill Epson User Group

Meets fourth Tuesday of the month at 3132 Foothill Blvd., La Crescenta. All types of micros are welcome. Demonstrations, discussions, newsletters, BBS, etc. For info contact: Jerry Jamriska, 2960 Hawkridge Dr., La Crescenta, CA 91214. (818) 248-7133.

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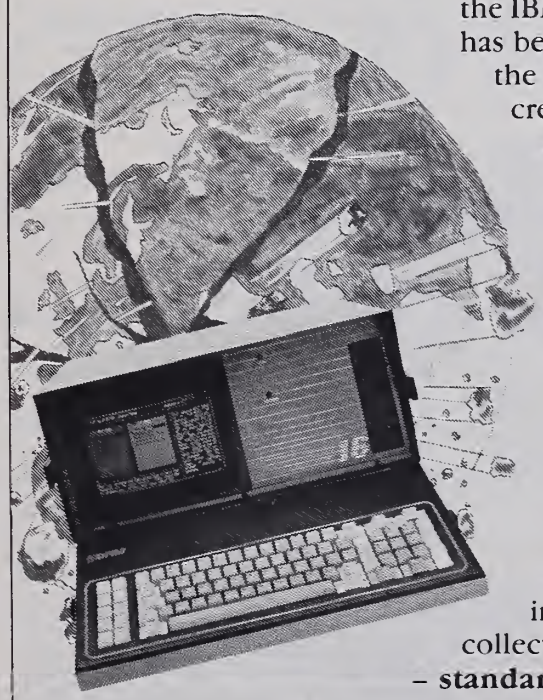

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Epson Users Group of Orange County
6075 Jeffrey Mark Street, Cypress, CA 90630, (213) 414-4817.

Epson Users of San Diego
P.O. Box 87448, San Diego, CA 92138, (619) 560-7604.

High Desert Epson Users Group
933 Cottonwood Drive, Barstow, CA 92311, (619) 256-3541.

PSC/QX
2934 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403, (213) 453-4535, Bulletin Board: (213) 474-4952.

South Bay Epson Users Group
1115 Cerise Avenue, Torrance, CA 90503, (213) 328-9916, Bulletin Board: (213) 618-1940.

FUJITSU

Want User's Group Info
Have Fujitsu Micro 16, am looking for a user's group or BBS. Contact Greg Lucido, 5199 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach, CA 90804.

HEWLETT-PACKARD

Club of Hewlett-Packard Hand-Held Users (CHHU)
The true personal computer is small enough to always be conveniently with the user. CHHU, pronounced "chew," is dedicated to the ultimate personal computer. Membership is $30/yr. You will receive 10 issues of the CHHU Chronicle. Meetings are announced in the CHHU Chronicle, or contact Richard J. Nelson. 2545 W. Camden Ave., Santa Ana. CA 92704. (714) 754-7757.

IBM

The North Orange County IBM PC Users Group
These people are interested in helping any PC users. They meet the second Tuesday of each month at the Sunny Hills Racquet Club in Fullerton at 7:30.

The Greater South Bay IBM PC Users Association
Any L.A. area PC or compatible owners are welcome to attend these meetings at the TRW cafeteria on Compton Blvd. Meeting time is 7:00 pm on the third Tuesday of each month. For info call (213) 325-7533.

The Claremont Computer Club
This club is for any interested IBM PC users. Meeting starts at 7:30 on the third Monday at the Galileo Edwards Bldg. on the Harvey Mudd Campus. For info call (714) 626-2286.

LISA

The Lisa Club of Los Angeles
This is a brand new club just forming for Lisa owners. Meetings are scheduled to be the first Monday of each month. They have no permanent meeting place as of yet, but for information call (213) 852-4994.

NEC

Orange County NEC Users Group (OCNUG)
Dedicated to NEC-APC computers, CP/M-86 & MS-DOS. Always room for any experience level. Meets 3 pm, third Saturday of the month. 6642 Lenore, Garden Grove. CA 92645. Call John Bingel at (714) 897-7656 for more info.

RADIO SHACK/TRS

South Bay Color Computer Club
TRS-80, TDP-100, Dragon. Meets third Friday of the month at Mercury Savings, 22939 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance. Info: Andrew Corlett, 1435 W. 172nd St., Gardena, CA 90247. (213) 538-8394.

The Orange County TRS-80 Group
This club is for all TRS users from beginning to expert. Meetings take place the third Sunday of every month at Chapman College, 1:30 pm. For info call 638-7889 after 7:00 pm.

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

LA 99er Computer Club
TI 99/4A support, classes and SIGs, large software library, monthly newsletter. Demonstrations, bulk purchase discounts on hardware, software and books. A good group to join. Meetings at Torrance Public Library, 3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA. 4th Wednesday of the month, 7 pm. Contact Terrie Masters, 148 S. Maple Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, (213) 271-6930.

The TI-99 Club
Yes, there still are a lot of 99's and 99/4a's around. If you own one, then get in touch with these people. They have good info for TI owners. Meetings take place at the Westminster Community Center on the third Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm. For info, call (714) 842-0859.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

ASSOCIATIONS

California Software Electronic Consultants (CAL-SEC)
California Software and Electronic Consultants Network. Support Groups — Workshops — Legal Referral — Newsletter. $30 Membership or SASE to CAL-SEC, 3046 College Ave. #4. Berkeley, CA 94705.

Community Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO)
Business networking group meets around SF area. Invests in new products, markets, brainstorms. Share info. on tech and non-tech business issues. 4 meeting locations, various week nights. Contact Dr. Crandall, P.O. Box 2781, San Rafael, CA 94912.

Computer Professionals For Social Responsibility
P.O. Box 717, Palo Alto, CA 94301. (415) 322-3778.

Computer Professionals For Social Responsibility (EAST BAY)
902 Rose Ave., Piedmont, CA 94611. Contact Bruce Joffe, (415) 768-0288 days, (415) 654-5263 eves.

Silicon Valley Cromemco Users
Meets 4th Tuesday of the month at MCM Enterprises, 215 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, CA. Call Ken Brown at (415) 327-8080 for details.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Kayfog RBBS & RCP/M (Fog System 11)
(415) 285-2687; Free; special help for newcomers, Kaypro, Morrow, Osborne, and CP/M.

SIMMS 001: Silicon Valley Interchange
(408) 732-9190. $25 annual fee; 44 megabytes strong, this BBS features a variety of message boards & thousands of files.

Napa Valley RBBS/RCP/M
(707) 257-6502. Interests in Atari, Apple, Osborne, dBase II.

Bay Area Atari Users Group
24 hour BBS (408) 578-2390.

NCR BBS of Northern California
Bulletin Board System for all users of NCR Microcomputers (Decision Mate V and PC-4). Learn more about NCR's microcomputers.

USER GROUPS

APPLE

San Francisco Apple Core
Meets every third Saturday of the month at Fort Mason, Bldg. C, Room 100 at 10 am. New products and innovations are featured for Apple II, Apple III, Macintosh and Lisa. Public domain library, SIGs, tech help, newsletter. $20 per year membership. Info: SF Apple Core, 1515 Sloat Blvd., Suite 2, San Francisco, CA 94132. (415) 566-2342 (voice), (415) 474-8608 (BBS/modem).

SPCA (Society For The Prevention of Cruelty To Apples)
The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Apples is a club for owners of Apple, Apple-compatible (Franklin, etc.) and Macintosh personal computers. It meets at 7:30 pm on the last Wednesday of the month at Thornton Jr. High School, on Thornton Ave. at Dusterberry, in Fremont. Contact SPCA Publicity Chairman Milton Buck, 5246 Channel Drive, Newark, or call (415) 794-2822 for more info.

ASHTON-TATE

Framework/Editor Bay Area Users Group (FREDBUG)
Purpose of the group is to share programming and applications techniques under FRAMEWORK for the business and technical professional. Call for info: Rudi Wiedemann, (408) 730-4159.

San Francisco dBase User Group
For advanced users and programmers. Meets once per month. Membership required for attendance. Contact Frank A. De Coster, 1100 Gough St., San Francisco, CA 94109, (415) 474-6693.

ATARI

ABACUS (Atari Bay Area Computer Users Society)
All ATARI users or prospective users are welcome. Membership ($15/year) provides public domain software, low cost blank disks, monthly newsletter, group prices on hardware and software, help from experts, low cost classes for beginners. Meetings first Saturday of the month, Fort Mason, SF, Room 300, Bldg. C, 10 am-2 pm. Contact Bill Zinn, P.O. Box 1823, Mill Valley, CA 94941. (415) 753-8483.

A.C.M.E. (Atari Computer — Marin Enthusiasts)
Meets monthly in Marin, third Thursday evening monthly from 7 pm on. Gallinas School, 177 N. San Pedro Rd., San Rafael. Contact Bruce Frank, (415) 435-6020, P.O. Box 222, Tiburon, CA 94920.

Diablo Valley Atari Computer Enthusiasts (D.A.C.E.)
Contact Richard C. Foster, Secretary, 3760 Lindero Drive, Concord, CA 94519.

Bay Area Atari Users Group
We have a 24-hour BBS at (408) 578-2390. Meetings at Dysan Auditorium, 4201 Patrick Henry Drive, Santa Clara, CA 95050, first Monday of the month. Contact Frank Nagle, P.O. Box 50459, Palo Alto, CA 94303, (415) 940-1323 for more info.

BASIS

Bay BUG
Basis 108 Users meet every first Friday of the month at College of Alameda Computer Room, 7:30 pm. Contact Roger Bernhardt, 536 Mission, San Francisco or call (415) 221-0262 for more information.

COMMODORE

San Francisco Commodore Users Group
Public domain library, classes, tech help, in depth demonstrations, monthly newsletters, Epromer, savings on purchases, all this and more. BBS # (415) 567-5046 300 baud. Meeting address 256 Laguna Honda Blvd., San Francisco, 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7:30 pm. Contact Roger Tierce, 278 27th Ave. # 102, SF, CA 94121, (415) 387-0225.

20/64 Computer Users Group — San Jose
Meets first Sunday of the month at the Theatre Building, San Jose City College, from 6 to 9 pm. (Donations requested to help defray cost of renting meeting space.) Call Herb Miller, (408) 253-2064 for more info, or write P.O. Box 18473, San Jose 95158.

20/64 Computer Users Group — San Jose North Valley
Meets second Saturday of the month at the second floor Community Room of Montgomery Ward's, Capitol and McKee Roads, San Jose, from 10 am to noon. (408) 253-2064.

20/64 Club
The Cupertino chapter of the 20/64 club for Commodore users meets the second Sunday of each month, Cupertino Public Library, 6 pm. Contact Rex Ackerman, P.O. Box 61063, Sunnyvale, CA 94086. Phone (408) 245-7270.

20/64 Computer Users Group — Campbell
Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Campbell Public Library, 70 North Central Avenue, Campbell, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. (408) 253-2064.

20/64 Computer Users Group — Gilroy
Meets the second Wednesday of the month at the Gilroy Public Library, 7397 Rosana Street, Gilroy, from 7 to 9 pm. (408) 253-2064.

Marin Commodore Computer Club
Meets second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm at Redwood High School, Corte Madera, Room 233. Use the back parking lot. Guests and new members always welcome. Contact Gary Porter, 95 Broadmoor Court, Novato, CA 94947.

Diablo Valley Commodore Users Group
Meetings Contra Costa Water District Auditorium, 1331 Concord Ave., Concord, CA, second Thursday of month at 7:30 pm. Write DVCUG, P.O. Box 27155, Concord, CA 94527, or call (415) 838-2838 for more info.

Napa Valley Commodore Computer Club
Meets first and third Mondays, 7:30 pm, at Northwood Elementary School, 2214 Berk St., Napa. Take Redwood Road to Dover St. to Berk St. Contact President Dick Bull (707) 257-3773 or vice-president Roger Pruym (707) 253-1690 for more info.

Lake County Commodore Users Group
Contact Al Reuss, P.O. Box 388, Clearlake, CA 95422.

CROMEMCO

Silicon Valley Cromemco Users
Meets 4th Tuesday of the month at MCM Enterprises. 215 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, CA. Call Ken Brown at (415) 327-8080 for details.

EAGLE

Eagle Computer Users Group
P.O. Box 8431, San Jose, CA 95155. (408) 973-1254, Dave Maisman.

EPSON

Bay Area Epson Salts — Epson
125 Del Centro, Millbrae, CA 94030, (415) 697-0567.

Epson Users of San Francisco
Bay Area Epson group has nationally circulated newsletter *Valnews*: 400 members — mostly QX-10 owners, growing software library. Meetings focus on mutual support. Mainly Valdocs and other applications. Meetings first Thursdays. 7 p.m. Fort Mason Center, Bldg. C, Room 205, San Francisco. Contact Alan Magary, 904 Irving St., Suite 271, San Francisco CA 94122, (415) 661-9270.

Napa Valley Epson Users Group
1307 Hestia Way, Napa, CA 94558, (707) 253-8727.

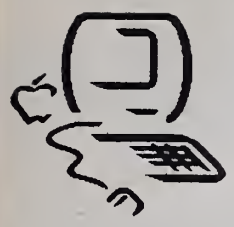
IBM

San Francisco PC Users Group
Largest SF group focusing on IBM and compatibles. Over 150 disks of public domain software, excellent monthly newsletter. 800+ members, $25/year. Please contact Rick Alber, 3853 18th St., SF 94114. (415) 864-5141.

South County PC Users Group
Meetings held second Thursday of each month, at Software Center, 22406 Foothill Blvd., Hayward, CA. Public Domain club disks, newsletter and help on MS-DOS problems. Contact Debra Taylor, P.O. Box 7656, Fremont CA 94537-7656 for more info, or call (415) 276-5111.

KAYPRO

Santa Rosa KUG
Owners of Kaypro computers or CP/M systems are invited to join the SRKUG. We conduct seminars and software instruction/training. Come join the fun. Meetings 3rd Thursdays of the month at 7 pm. Call for meeting address: James Daniels, 1029 Damon Court. Santa Rosa, CA 95401. (707) 575-8149.



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Meeting address _____

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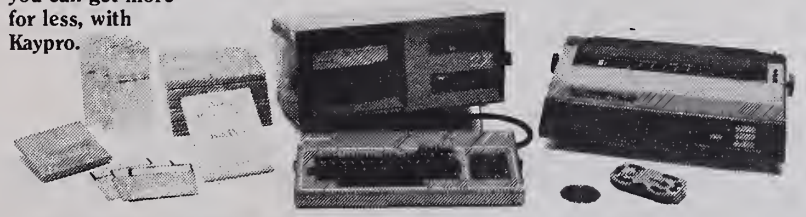

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OSBORNE

East Bay FOG (First Osborne Group)

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SMOG3 Osborne User Group (Peninsula)

Meets first and second Monday of every month at Crane Place, 1331 Crane, Menlo Park. Call Phil Moore at (415) 325-2442.

PIED PIPER

Pied Piper Users Group

Owners of Pied Piper CP/M based computer are invited to call or attend the PPUG. Meets last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Please call (415) 638-1146. Meeting address: 10950 Elvessa St., Oakland 94605.

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SANYO

Sanyo 1100/1200 User Group

of the San Francisco Bay Area. P.O. Box 297, San Mateo, 8-10 pm, every 2nd Friday of month. Send large self-addressed stamped envelope for copy of newsletter.

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Timex/Sinclair user group. S/W library and newsletter. Meets at West Branch of Berkeley Public Library at corner of University and San Pablo. Meets 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Contact Rick Link. 654 40th St., Richmond, CA 94805. (415) 234-3310.

Peninsula Timex/Sinclair User Group (PUG)

Timex/Sinclair user group. S/W library and newsletter. Meets at Peninsula Hospital, 1783 El Camino, Burlingame. Meets 3rd Sunday of the month at 1 pm. Contact George Mockridge, 263 Gateway #107, Pacifica, CA 94044. (415) 359-3198.

Silicon Valley Timex/Sinclair User Group (SVTSUG)

Timex/Sinclair user group. S/W library and newsletter. Meets at Dysan Corp., 5201 Patrick Henry Drive, Santa Clara. Meets last Tuesday of the month at 7 pm. Contact Rita Carr, P.O. Box 4133, Santa Clara, CA 94044-0133. (408) 738-2888 ext. 45.

VECTOR

Bay Area Vector Group

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VICTOR

East Bay Victor* Group

The East Bay Victor* Group (for users of Victor 9000's and ACT Apricot machines) meets at 7 pm the second Wednesday of every month at Monarch Computers, at 863C San Pablo Ave., Albany, CA. Public domain software usually available.

San Francisco Victor* Group

The San Francisco Victor* Group meets at 4 pm the third Sunday of each month at La Bettola di Adolph Restaurant, corner of Broadway and Montgomery. Come early for public domain copying. Contact Darrell Bross, 254 Winding Way, San Francisco, CA 94112, (415) 586-5788.

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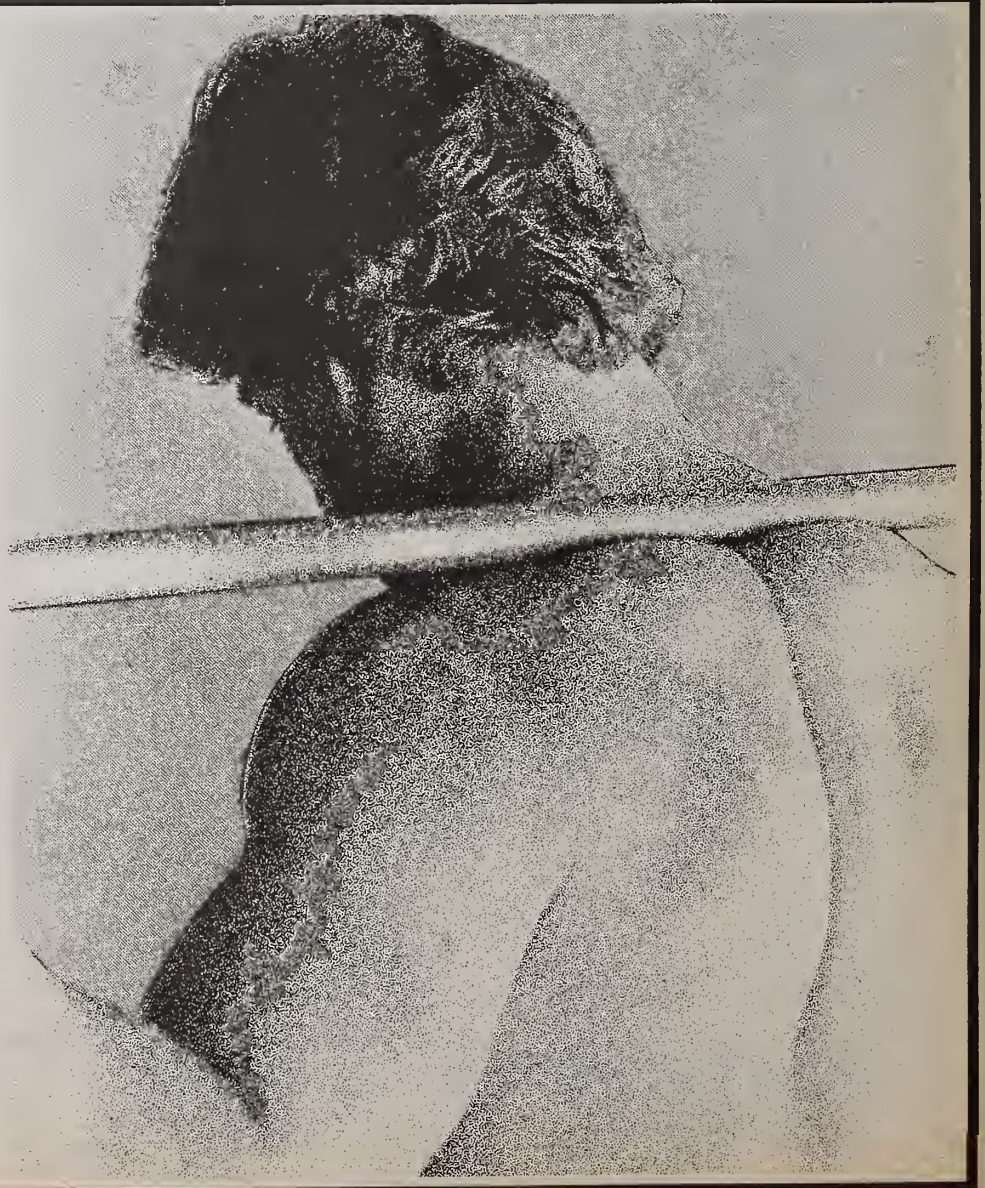

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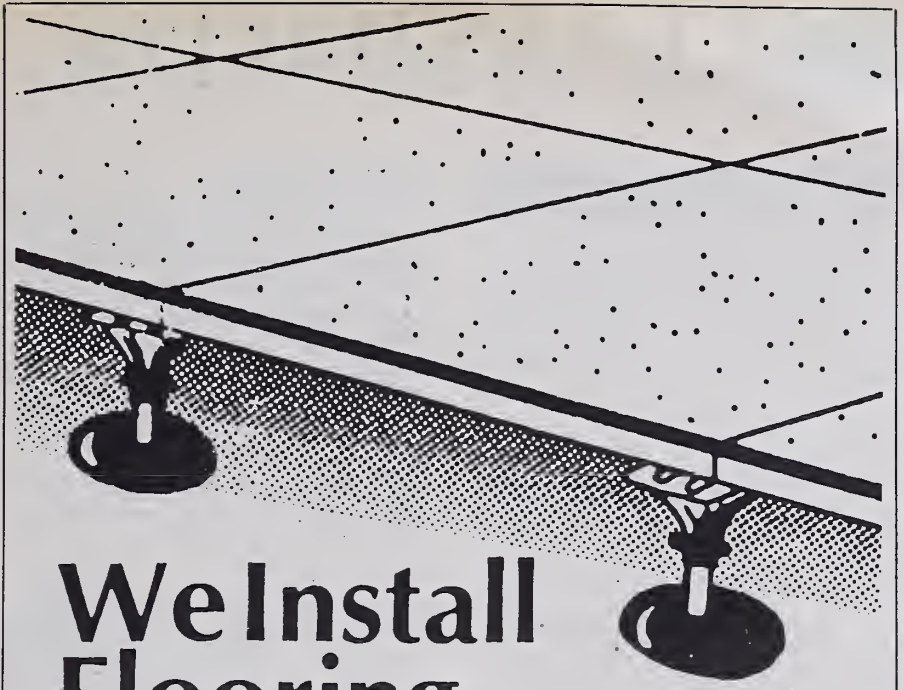

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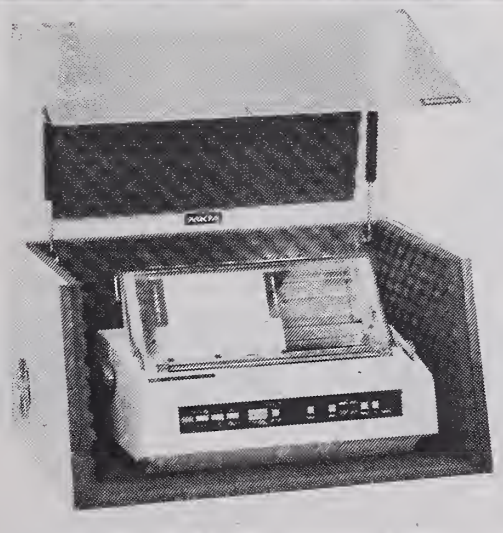

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RETAIL/SERVICE NEWS

Gene Sakalay points out the irrestible deals at JDR Microdevices. Photo: Mary Eisenhart

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Jeff Rose, the president of JDR Microdevices, is now 23 years old. When he was a mere youth of 18, a hardcore electronics hobbyist, he began running a mail order business, taking out a one-column magazine ad and selling parts. "We started offering more and more items that the public wanted," says advertising/promotional manager Gene Sakalay, "and here we are."

Here indeed. The company now has 50 employees, a monthly mail-order catalog, and a retail outlet. In addition to an impressive array of chips and parts, JDR features accessories and peripherals: monitors, books, cables, plugs, joysticks, diskettes, etc. One of the company's specialities is disk drives for Apple and IBM computers.

"Our pricing is very good," says Sakalay, "and beyond that we have a warranty on *everything* for 90 days. We have a customer service department, we have technicians on duty, we have a retail store. Customers can order toll-free — it doesn't cost them anything to come to us. If they live in the area, they can come to our retail store." Their catalog, which features monthly specials, is available by calling the store and requesting it. JDR is also in the process of compiling a mailing list.

In addition to its retail and mail-order operations, JDR does a substantial wholesale business, and offers price reductions for high-volume purchases.

Convention-goers from out of town will soon have a chance to get acquainted with JDR. Sakalay extends a general invitation to check out the company's booth at the upcoming West Coast Computer Faire. He promises, "Our prices will be *awesome*!"

— Mary Eisenhart

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"The thing that separates us from most stores," says Shanti Mutha of Software Solutions, "is that we have a good selection, a large variety, we know what we're talking about — and on top of that, we offer at least 20% off list." Software Solutions features an extensive line of software for Commodore, Apple, and IBM. In addition, says Mutha, they have the Bay Area's widest selection of software for Macintosh. The store also carries a large assortment of add-on hardware, accessories, and books.

Three years ago, Mutha and his two sons began doing business as Nonagon Software, a mail order house. The venture prospered, and they opened the retail store in El Cerrito in 1983.

The store is well-stocked, and if the item you want isn't on the sales floor, it may well be in the stockroom. If not, it can be ordered and received very quickly: "If the item is from our regular distributors, we can have the merchandise in the customer's hands in 48 hours, because we have an overnight shipment," Mutha says.

Nonagon, the mail order house, continues to be an important part of the business. The current catalog features a substantial supplement on Macintosh software and accessories; both publications are available by requesting them from the store. The new catalog, now in the works, will include useful buyer's guide information: highlighting of best-selling items and tips to help the new computer owner make informed software decisions.

With years of experience in the field, Software Solutions' personnel are able to advise customers wisely as to software choices, and also to offer a relatively unique service — custom programming packages for vertical market use. Software Solutions, has maintained a good track record of meeting customers' needs. A substantial portion of its business comes from repeat customers, and the clientele is remarkably diverse, ranging from home users and small businesses to school districts and Fortune 500 companies.

— Mary Eisenhart

Shanti Mutha of Software Solutions: Photo: Mary Eisenhart.

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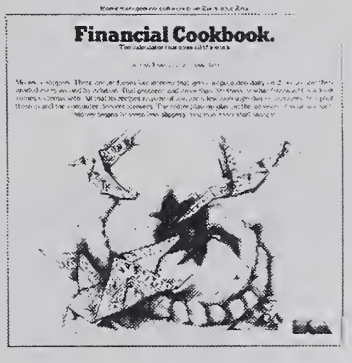

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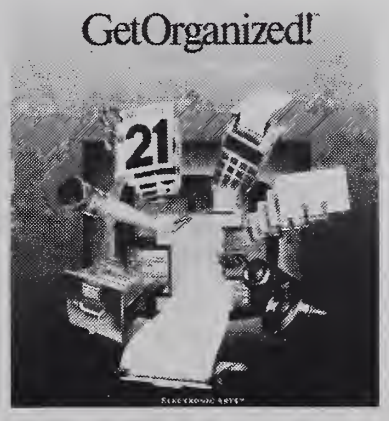

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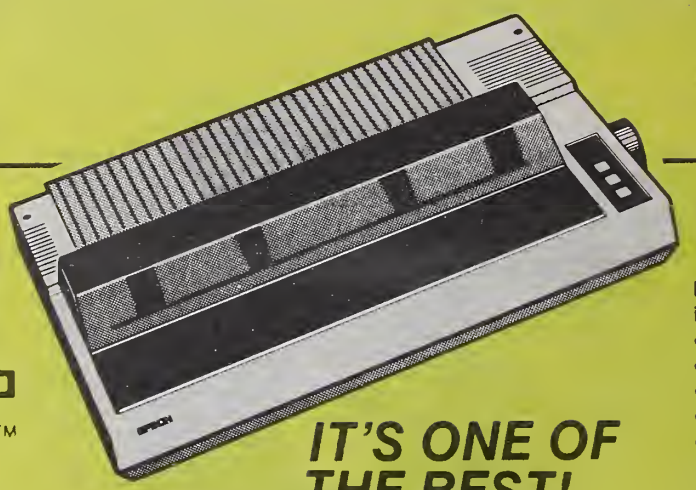

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